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Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support in the Early Years

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Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to reach their potential. A child's early life experience has a major impact upon their future opportunities. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important. Good parenting, together with high quality early years learning provide the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets out the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

Overarching principles

'Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are:

- every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
- children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
- importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates.' ** (EYFS Framework 2024 7)

The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Learning and development requirements

The requirements in the statutory framework define what providers must do, working in partnership with parents and carers. Early years providers must ensure that children in their care complete the EYFS ready for school to fully benefit from opportunities presented to them in the future.

The learning and development requirements comprise:

- The seven areas of learning and development and the educational programmes
- The early learning goals, which summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding that all young children should have gained by the end of the Reception year
- The assessment requirements (when and how they should discuss children's progress with parents and carers)

The seven areas of learning and development that set out what providers must teach in their settings. Three prime areas important for learning and forming relationships, which build a foundation for children to thrive and provide the basis for learning in all areas:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

Early years providers must also support children in four other specific areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

A child's individual needs, interests and stage of development must inform planning to ensure that it is challenging and enjoyable in all areas of learning and development. For the youngest children, focus should be around the three prime areas and reflect the child's skills and capabilities they need to be ready for school.

English as a second language

Providers must take reasonable steps for children whose home language is not English and provide opportunities for them to develop and use their home language in play and learning which will support their language development at home.

Providers must also ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and use English and reach a good standard by the end of the EYFS to enable them to access the school curriculum in Year 1. If a child does not have a strong grasp of the English language, then they must explore the child's skills in the home language to establish whether there may be a cause for concern about a language delay.

SEN in the early years

All early years providers are required to have arrangements in place to identify and support children with SEN or disabilities and to promote equality of opportunity for children in their care. These requirements are set out in the EYFS framework. The EYFS framework also requires practitioners to review children's progress and share a summary with parents. (DFE SEND Code of practice 2014 5.12)

What is SEN support?

Every child or young person with special educational needs should have SEN support. This means help that is additional to or different from the support generally given to other children or young people of the same age.

In the early years, it is important that there is no delay in putting in place any necessary special educational provision as a delay may lead to a learning difficulty, frustration in learning, behaviour difficulties and loss of self-esteem.

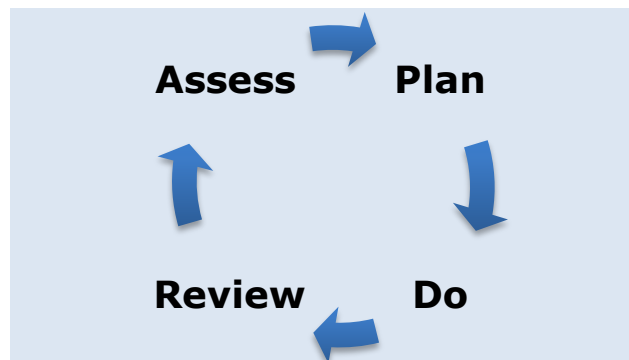
The purpose of SEN support is to help children or young people to make progress and achieve improved outcomes to prepare them for adult life. Maintained nursery schools **must** inform parents, other providers should involve parents in this process.

A graduated approach

The SEND Code of Practice* says

All settings should adopt a graduated approach with four stages of action (5.38)

These are:



Assess

The early year's practitioner working with the settings SENCo and the child's parent's, should assess the child's needs, so that they give the right support. Where there is little or no progress or improvement, it may be necessary to involve more specialist professionals.

In Kent all providers of early years education and are allocated an Early Years Quality Adviser or Childminder Adviser to ensure a high quality provision. Early Years SEND Support and Inclusion Practitioners will work with the SENCo, Manager, or Key worker for children needing extra support than ordinarily available in the setting. In addition The Specialist Teaching and Learning Service can provide specialist support to settings, including working with individual children and supporting transition to school.

Plan

If the practitioner decides that your child needs SEN support, they should formally notify the parents. In consultation with the parent, the practitioner and the SENCo should agree the outcomes that they want to achieve, together with the interventions and support to be provided and the expected impact upon progress, development, or behaviour. A date to review these should be set.

Any relevant staff training or development needs should be identified and agreed.

The **SEND Code of Practice*** says:

Parents should be involved in planning support and, where appropriate, in reinforcing the provision or contributing to progress at home. (5.41)

Do

Your child's key person usually remains responsible for working with the child every day, supported by the settings SENCo. The SENCo should be overseeing the implementation of the interventions or support programme agreed and assisting the key person in assessing the effectiveness of the SEN support upon the child's progress and development.

Review

The effectiveness and quality of the interventions and support should be evaluated by both the practitioner (key person) and the SENCo considering the child's views. This should be done in line with the review date already agreed. Any changes to the outcomes and support should be agreed in line with the child's progress and development. Parents should be kept updated with clear information on the impact the SEN support is having upon the child and be involved in the planning of the next steps.

This four-step cycle should be revisited on a regular basis and with increasing frequency and detail to identify the best way to secure good progress. Intended outcomes should be shared and reviewed with parents together with actions taken by the setting at agreed times.

Progress checks

The early year's practitioners **must** review progress between the age of two and three and provide parents with a short-written summary of their child's development, focusing in particular on communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development.

The **SEND Code of Practice*** says:

This progress check **must** identify the child's strengths and any areas where the child's progress is slower than expected. If there are significant emerging concerns (or identified SEN or disability) practitioners should develop a targeted plan to support the child, involving other professionals. (5.23)

A targeted plan **must** describe the activities and strategies the provider intends to implement to address any issues or concerns.

As well as the two-year-old check, practitioners should monitor and review progress and development of all children throughout the early years.

A delay in learning and development may or may not indicate that a child has SEN, a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision. This also includes a child that may be displaying difficult or withdrawn behaviour. Where there are concerns, there should be an assessment to determine whether there are any casual factors such as an underlying learning or communication difficulties.

Where a child has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than their peers, or a disability that prevents or hinders a child from accessing activities and using facilities in the setting and requires special educational provision, the setting should make that provision.

Reviewing the interventions effectiveness and whether the child has made progress can form part of the assessment of need, informing the next steps to be taken in line with the graduated approach to support.

Funding in the Early Years

Working parents May be entitled to 30 hours funded childcare support from the term after your child turns 9 months old, until they start school. 30 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year.

Free for two funding – Parents on specific benefits may be entitled to free childcare. Please speak to the nursery that you would like your child to attend as they will apply for the funding on your behalf. The placement will not commence until funding has been approved and in the term after a child's second Birthday.

All 3 – 4-year olds are entitled to up to **15 hours of free** childcare/nursery hours. This funding starts the term after the child's 3rd birthday. In certain circumstances, families may be entitled to the extended 30 hours of free childcare. Please speak to the nursery. You can find out more using this link: [**15 and 30 hours - frequently asked questions | Childcare Choices**](#)

Early Years Pupil Premium

Extra funding paid directly to early years providers to support a child's education and care. Speak to your early years provider. You can find out whether you are eligible by using the link: [Get extra funding for your early years provider - GOV.UK](#)

Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding

This is funding that a nursery can apply for, for a child with complex and severe difficulties who requires more support than the nursery can provide. Speak to your early years provider.

Education health and care needs assessments This is an assessment that the local authority may undertake of a child's special educational needs where special educational provision may be needed above and beyond that which a mainstream early years setting can provide. The early years provider will need to show that they have used their best endeavours to support the child's learning and development.

Where can I get more information, advice or support

You can find out more about SEN Support by:

- Looking at the providers website for SEN information and policy
- Talking to your child's key person, settings SENCo or childminder
- **SEND Information Hub – KCC's Local Offer**
[Support for children with SEND in early years - Kent County Council](#)

***SEND Code of Practice (Chapter 5)** link:

[SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf](#)

**** The statutory framework for the Early Years foundation stage** which is split into two: [EYFS statutory framework for childminders](#); which includes all early years settings. [EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

You can also ring our **Helpline** on **03000 41 3000** for:

- Information about SEN support, including information about SEN funding
- Information and signposting to other organisations and support groups
- Information and advice about your rights to request an education, health and care needs assessment
- Advice about what to do if you are not happy with the support your Early Years setting is providing

On request, this information can be provided in alternative formats.

HELPLINE: 03000 41 3000

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