



INTRODUCTION TO SEND IN THE UK

BEGINNER'S GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Welcome to the journey of supporting a child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Children with SEND have additional learning, physical, or emotional needs that require extra support or adaptations in school, more than would be part of usual provision – i.e. provision that is “different from or additional to usual provision”. SEND can vary widely and may affect a child's ability to learn, communicate, or participate fully in school life.

Every child and young person in school has the right to an education that is tailored to their needs, promotes high standards, and helps them reach their full potential. This enables them to achieve their best and make a smooth transition into adulthood. Schools are responsible for identifying and addressing the Special Educational Needs (SEN) of their students and must have a designated member of the governing body overseeing the school's SEN and disability provisions. This individual is typically the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). Identifying special needs should be an integral part of monitoring **all students'** progress and development.

In the UK, schools are required to provide appropriate support to help children with SEND succeed and thrive. The SEND Code of Practice is the official guide for teachers who work with children who have Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The SEND Code of Practice stresses the importance of enabling the child/young person to participate fully in decisions and recognises the need to support both the child/young person and their parents in achieving the best educational and personal outcomes. The focus is on a family-centred system of care and education which spans four broad areas of special educational needs and support:

- **Communication and interaction**
- **Cognition and learning**
- **Social, emotional and mental health**
- **Sensory and/or physical needs**

Understanding the various aspects of SEND can help parents and teachers better advocate for and support children in their educational journey. This guide offers a general overview of SEND and the key approaches that can help ensure every child receives the support they deserve. For more resources and information, visit sendatheart.com.

UNDERSTANDING SEND

Understanding SEND is the first step to providing effective support, whether you're a parent or a teacher. SEND encompasses a wide range of needs that children may have, affecting their learning and development. These needs may overlap in different areas and can include:

- **Learning Difficulties:** Such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia
- **Developmental Challenges:** Like autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- **Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs:** Such as ADHD or emotional disorders
- **Physical/Sensory Impairments:** Including visual, hearing impairments, cerebral palsy etc.

NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM

1 Assessment and Identification:

- If your child presents with educational or developmental concerns, the class teacher will discuss these concerns with you to ascertain context as well as understand any concerns you may have as a parent/carer.
- Your child may undergo assessments/observations by the class teacher and the school's SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), keeping you apprised over time and collaborating on best next steps.
- With your permission, your child may be referred for further, more detailed assessments by external experts such as Educational Psychologists (EP), Speech and Language Therapists (SALT), paediatricians or other specialists to identify specific needs.
- This process helps determine the support and interventions required for your child's education/development and whether they need SEN Support (Special Educational Needs Support). Usually this support is then set out in an IEP (Individual Education Plan or a Provision Map.
- If your child has a diagnosed SEND or is on the SEND register, this *does not* automatically mean they need an EHCP (Education, Health, Care Plan).

2 Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP):

- If your child's needs are significant and require more support than what is typically available in mainstream education, they may qualify for an application to the LA (Local Authority) for an EHCP.
- An EHC plan is designed to ensure that a child or young person receives the special educational support they need to achieve the best possible outcomes. When it is determined that special educational provision is necessary, the local authority must carry out an assessment of the child or young person's education, health, and care needs.

3 **School Placement:**

- Choosing the right school is crucial. Consider whether mainstream education with additional support or a specialised provision would best meet your child's needs.
- Visit schools, talk to teachers and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), and ask about their experience with similar children.
- Children with an EHCP in place can opt for a school placement in a specialist setting.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

- **Understanding Their Needs:** Educate yourself about your child's specific condition or needs. Understanding their challenges and strengths will guide your support strategies.
- **Advocating for Your Child:** Be their advocate in school meetings and reviews. Ensure their needs are understood and met effectively. Stay informed about their progress and any changes in their needs.
- **Building a Support Network:** Connect with other parents of children with SEND. They can offer valuable advice, support, and understanding. Seek support from local or national organizations that specialise in your child's condition.

SELF-CARE FOR PARENTS

- **Seeking Support** Take care of your own well-being. Seek emotional support from family, friends, or support groups. Don't hesitate to ask for help when needed, whether it's from professionals or loved ones.
- **Staying Informed** Stay updated on developments in education, healthcare, and policies related to SEND. Knowledge empowers you to advocate more effectively for your child.
- **Celebrating Achievements** Celebrate every milestone and achievement, no matter how small. Recognize and appreciate your child's progress and efforts.

EVERYDAY STRATEGIES

- **Establishing Routine and Structure:** Consistency can be reassuring for children with SEND. Establish routines for daily activities, homework, and bedtime.
- **Communicating Effectively:** Use clear and simple language when giving instructions or explaining concepts. Visual aids and diagrams can also enhance understanding.
- **Encouraging Independence:** Support your child in developing independence skills appropriate to their age/abilities. Encourage participation in activities they enjoy/excel in.

Understanding SEND may feel daunting at first, but know that you're not alone. Parents and teachers alike have support networks available, from online communities to local resources. Reach out, ask questions, and remember that every small step you take makes a difference. Supporting a child with SEND isn't about having all the answers immediately. It's a journey where small actions can make a big impact. With knowledge, support, and advocacy, you can provide your child with the best opportunities to thrive. By educating yourself, asking questions, and seeking support, you're already making a positive difference.

Remember, each child is unique and your love and understanding are invaluable in their journey.

For further guidance and resources contact info@sendatheart.com

With much love...

Genevieve Joseph-Williams ❤️

Disclaimer: This guide provides general information and guidance. For specific advice related to your child, consult with professionals such as educational psychologists, paediatricians, or schools special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs).