



Getting help for your special needs child

Parents with a special needs child are often unaware of the extent of help their child needs and how they can get that help. A key document which parents will find helpful is the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001), ISBN 1-8418-55294 available from DFES Publications at dfes@prolog.uk.com or by phone on 0845 60 222 60.

So, firstly, which children have special educational needs? The definition is:

“Children have special educational needs if they have a *learning difficulty* which calls for *special educational provision* to be made for them.

Children have a *learning difficulty* if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age, or;
- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority; or
- are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them.”

Fundamental Principles

- A child with special educational needs should have their needs met;
- The views of the child should be sought and taken into account;



- Parents have a vital role to play in supporting their child's education, and;
- Children with special educational needs should be offered full access to a broad, balanced and relevant education, including an appropriate curriculum for the foundation stage and the National Curriculum.

The Three Stages of Special Educational Provision

The three stages by which provision is made available to children with special educational needs are School Action, School Action Plus and Statementing. The following is a simplified description of the first two stages:

A child can be placed on School Action if the teacher or SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) considers that a child needs interventions that are additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum and strategies.

A child is usually placed on School Action Plus if there is a need to call in an expert who is external to the school, e.g. a literacy advisory teacher, an educational psychologist or a teacher of the visually impaired. A child is placed on School Action Plus usually when a child receiving the resources and strategies provided under School Action continues to have difficulties and/or fails to make reasonable progress over time.



Individual Education Plans

A key document for children with special educational needs is the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The Code of Practice states that the IEP should include:

- The short-term targets set for or by the child;
- The teaching strategies to be used;
- The provision to be put in place;
- When the plan is to be reviewed;
- Success and/or exit criteria;
- Outcomes (to be recorded when IEP is reviewed).

The IEP should be reviewed 'at least twice a year.' It should be reviewed termly or possibly more frequently for some children. Parents' and children's views should be sought; both parents and child should be present at a review meeting.

Statutory Assessment

Even with the provision made under School Action and School Action Plus, some children continue to have difficulties and/or fail to make progress.

In these circumstances the school and/or the parents can request a Statutory Assessment. The LEA will need information about the child's special educational needs and any action taken to deal with those needs, including any resources or special arrangements put in place. After deciding to make a statutory assessment the LEA must seek parental, educational, medical, psychological and social services advice.

Statements of Special Educational Needs

The local education authority (LEA) will decide on the basis of the evidence received from a statutory assessment whether or not to write a statement. In general, statements are issued for children with the most severe special educational needs. Typically, LEAs issue statements to 2%-3% of the child population. This figure includes all types of special educational needs.

A statement will describe all of the child's special needs, the objectives, all of the special educational provision to meet the child's needs, the name of the school recommended and any non-educational needs and provision.

There are time limits for making statements as described in the table (see right).

All statements of special educational needs must be reviewed at an annual review meeting firstly within a calendar year of the date of the statement and from then on within a calendar year of the date of the last annual review.

Parents are invited to contribute to the statementing process and also to annual reviews.

If an LEA decides not to statement a child, or if any aspect of the draft statement is not in accordance with parental wishes, then the parents can enter into discussions with the LEA and, if the LEA continues to maintain its position, then the parents have a right to appeal at a tribunal.

Special Educational Provision

Special educational provision divides into human resources on the one hand and strategies, approaches and teaching resources on the other hand.

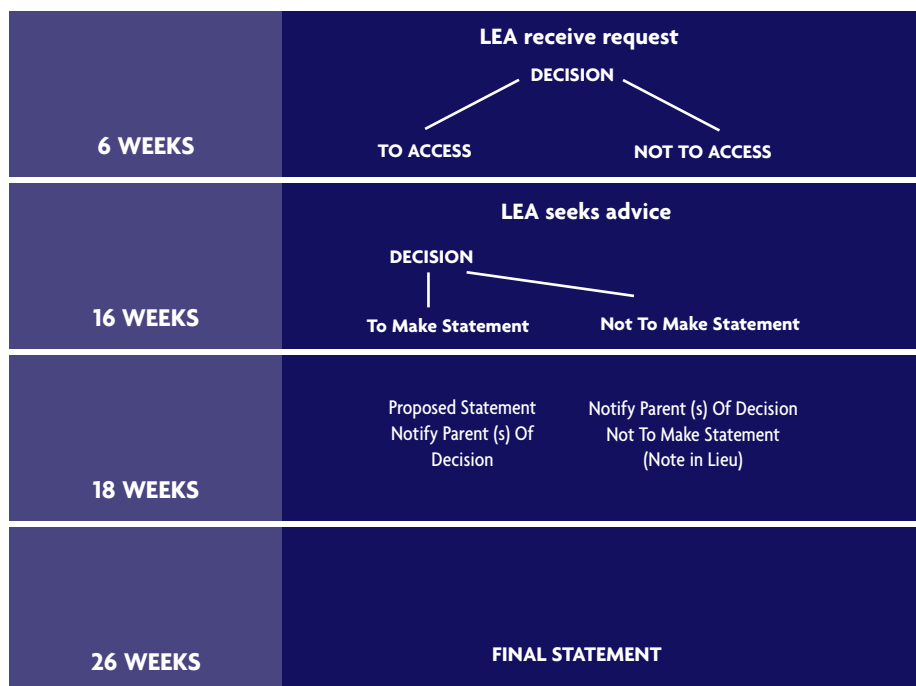
Human resources include teachers, classroom or teaching assistants, specialist teachers of various disabilities and, less often, paramedical specialists such as occupational therapists and speech & language therapists.

Examples of strategies, approaches and teaching resources are many and varied, for example, books in Braille or talking books for the visually impaired and hearing impaired respectively.

Typically for the dyslexic child, recommendations include the provision of a structured, multi-sensory literacy and/or maths programme, a tape recorder to help with note-taking and access to a laptop computer to help with recording of information on paper.

The Allocation of Resources

Experience shows that there are never enough resources for special educational needs. Parents who find out about their rights are better prepared to campaign for the resources which their child needs.



Appleford School

For nearly twenty years Appleford School has provided high quality education for dyslexic children. With appropriate treatment many of our young people have gone on to achieve their ambitions and to become happy and fulfilled adults after an unpromising start.

Now there is a new opportunity for parents worried about their children's education and developmental progress.

Appleford can now offer parents a specialist, professional assessment service for the diagnosis of dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD, dyspraxia and other coordination difficulties, autism, Asperger's disorder and speech and language disorders including semantic-pragmatic disorder.

All the available research indicates that the earlier a child's difficulties are diagnosed and treated the more optimistic the outcome for the child. So, it is sensible to have your child assessed as early as possible.

The assessment and diagnosis is made together with an assessment of the child's intellectual abilities and educational attainments in literacy and numeracy skills by Dr Peter Gardner.

Dr. Peter Gardner

B.A., DipPsych., M.A., Ed.D., A.F.B.Ps.S.,

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Chartered Psychologist

Peter gained an Honours Degree in Psychology from Nottingham University, a postgraduate diploma in Academic Psychology from University College London, a Master of Arts Degree in Therapy and Counselling from Antioch College, U.S.A. (London Branch) and a doctorate from the University of Bristol. He has been a lecturer in a number of universities and was a tutor at the Child Guidance Training Centre, London, responsible for post-graduate training of educational psychologists on a British Psychological Society – and Department of Education and Skills – accredited course.

He is a Chartered Educational Psychologist, a Chartered Forensic Psychologist and a Chartered Counselling Psychologist of the British Psychological Society. He is a Full Practitioner Member of the British Psychological Society Division of Neuropsychology. He is a registered Psychotherapist (United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy) and was a committee member of the Psychology and Psychotherapy Association. Much of his work is legal work, including the preparation of detailed court reports and submission of oral evidence, working for Crown Courts, Magistrates Courts and Guardian *ad litem* panels. He acted as an expert witness in the precedent-setting Phelps v London Borough of Hillingdon education negligence case in the High Court in July 1997 and was described by Mr. Justice Garland as 'particularly well qualified, careful and fair.' His legal work is split roughly 50:50 between Claimant and Defendant work. He is a founder of both Appleford School and of Daneswood, Shipham, near Cheddar, a care home for young adults with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, which is registered with and approved by CSCi.

Contact Details

To make an appointment for your child or you to be assessed, please contact:

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