

The SEN Code of Practice

School Action

When a class teacher or the SENCO identifies a child with SEN the class teacher should provide interventions that are additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum offer and strategies (*School Action*).

The triggers for intervention through *School Action* could be the teacher's or others' concern, underpinned by evidence, about a child who despite receiving differentiated learning opportunities:

- makes little or no progress even when teaching approaches are targeted particularly in a child's identified area of weakness
- shows signs of difficulty in developing literacy or mathematics skills which result in poor attainment in some curriculum areas
- presents persistent emotional or behavioural difficulties which are not ameliorated by the behaviour management techniques usually employed in the school
- has sensory or physical problems, and continues to make little or no progress despite the provision of specialist equipment
- has communication and/or interaction difficulties, and continues to make little or no progress despite the provision of a differentiated curriculum.

If a child's class teacher in consultation with parents concludes that a child may need further support to help their progress, the teacher should seek the help of the SENCO.

The teacher and the SENCO should consider the teacher's reasons for concern alongside any information about the child already available to the school.

To help inform the decision on the nature of the additional help that might be needed by the child through *School Action* the class teacher together with the SENCO should collect all the available information about the child and seek additional information from the parents. In some cases outside professionals from health or social services may already be involved with the child. In such instances it is good practice for these professionals to liaise with the school and keep them informed of their input. Where these professionals have not already been working with the school staff, the SENCO should contact them if the parents agree.

The SENCO should take the lead in the further assessment of the child's particular strengths and weaknesses; planning future support for the child in discussion with colleagues; and monitoring and subsequently reviewing the action taken. The child's class teacher should remain responsible for working with the child on a daily basis and for planning and delivering an individualised programme. Parents should always be consulted and kept informed of the action taken to help the child, and of the outcome of this action.

The information collected about the child, and details of the extra help given to them, can be incorporated in the child's individual record. The record should also include previous observations on the child made as part of the assessment and recording systems in place for all children.

Nature of intervention

The SENCO and the child's class teacher should decide on the *Action* needed to help the child to progress in the light of their earlier assessment. There is sometimes an expectation that this help will take the form of the deployment of extra staff to enable one-to-one tuition to be given to the child. However, this may not be the most appropriate way of helping the child. A more appropriate approach might be to

provide different learning materials or special equipment; to introduce some group or individual support; to devote extra adult time to devising the nature of the planned intervention and to monitoring its effectiveness; or to undertake staff development and training to introduce more effective strategies. Speedy access to LEA support services for one-off or occasional advice on strategies or equipment or for staff training may make it possible to provide effective intervention without the need for regular or ongoing input from external agencies.

Individual Education Plans

Strategies employed to enable the child to progress should be recorded within an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Further information on managing IEPs and Group Education Plans can be found in the SEN Toolkit. The IEP should include information about:

- 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 only record that which is additional to or different from the differentiated curriculum plan, which is in place as part of provision for all children. The IEP should be crisply written and focus on three or four individual targets, chosen from those relating to the key areas of communication, literacy, mathematics, and behaviour and social skills that match the child's needs. The IEP should be discussed with the child and the parents.

Where a child with identified SEN is at serious risk of disaffection or exclusion the IEP should reflect appropriate strategies to meet their needs³¹. A Pastoral Support Programme should not be used to replace the graduated response to special educational needs.

Reviewing IEPs

IEPs should be reviewed at least twice a year. Ideally they should be reviewed termly, or possibly more frequently for some children. At least one review in the year could coincide with a routine Parents' Evening, although schools should recognise that some parents will prefer a private meeting. Reviews need not be unduly formal, but parents' views on the child's progress should be sought and they should be consulted as part of the review process. Wherever possible, the child should also take part in the review process and be involved in setting the targets. If the child is not involved in the review, their ascertainable views should be considered in any discussion.

School Action Plus

A request for help from external services is likely to follow a decision taken by the SENCO and colleagues, in consultation with parents, at a meeting to review the child's IEP.

Schools should always consult specialists when they take action on behalf of a child through *School Action Plus*. But the involvement of specialists need not be limited to such children. Outside specialists can play an important part in the very early identification of special educational needs and in advising schools on effective provision designed to prevent the development of more significant needs. They can act as consultants and be a source for in-service advice on learning and behaviour management strategies for all teachers.

Guidance is set out in DfEE Circular 10/99 'Social Inclusion: Pupil Support.'

At *School Action Plus* external support services, both those provided by the LEA and by outside agencies, will usually see the child, in school if that is appropriate and practicable, so that they can advise teachers on new IEPs with fresh targets and accompanying strategies, provide more specialist assessments that can inform planning and the measurement of a pupil's progress, give advice on the use of new or specialist strategies or materials, and in some cases provide support for particular activities. The kinds of advice and support available to schools will vary according to local policies.

The triggers for *School Action Plus* could be that, despite receiving an individualised programme and/or concentrated support under *School Action*, the child:

- continues to make little or no progress in specific areas over a long period
- continues working at National Curriculum levels substantially below that expected of children of a similar age
- continues to have difficulty in developing literacy and mathematics skills
- has emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child's own learning or that of the class group, despite having an individualised behaviour management programme
- has sensory or physical needs, and requires additional specialist equipment or regular advice or visits by a specialist service
- has ongoing communication or interaction difficulties that impede the development of social relationships and cause substantial barriers to learning.

Where schools seek the help of external support services, those services will need to see the child's records in order to establish which strategies have already been employed and which targets have been set and achieved. They can then advise on new and appropriate targets for the child's IEP and on accompanying strategies. The targets set may require specialist assessment arrangements to measure the child's progress. If so, outside specialists, for example educational psychologists may be required for this.

The SENCO and class teacher, together with curriculum, literacy and numeracy coordinators and external specialists, should consider a range of different teaching approaches and appropriate equipment and teaching materials, including the use of information technology. The external specialist may act in an advisory capacity, or provide additional specialist assessment or be involved in teaching the child directly. In some instances improved management or alternative arrangements based on advice from health professionals may considerably reduce the child's special educational needs.

The resulting new IEP for the child should set out fresh strategies for supporting the child's progress. Although developed with the help of outside specialists, the strategies specified in the IEP should usually be implemented, at least in part and as far as possible, in the normal classroom setting. The delivery of the interventions recorded in the IEP continues to be the responsibility of the class teacher.

If the SENCO and the external specialist consider that the information gathered about the child is insufficient, and that more detailed advice must be obtained from other outside professionals, then the consent of the child's parents must be sought.

The SENCO should note in the child's records:

- what further advice is being sought
- the support to be provided for the child pending receipt of the advice.

School request for a statutory assessment

Where a request for a statutory assessment is made by a school to an LEA, the child will have demonstrated significant cause for concern. The LEA will seek evidence

from the school that any strategy or programme implemented for the child in question has been continued for a reasonable period of time without success and that alternatives have been tried, or the reasons why this has not occurred. The LEA will need information about the child's progress over time, and will also need clear documentation in relation to the child's special educational needs and any action taken to deal with those needs, including any resources or special arrangements put in place. In some cases there will be existing reports or written advice from external agencies that should be included in the documentation, however where there is no such evidence LEAs should not require it in order to decide whether an assessment is needed.

The evidence that the LEA will need to examine in deciding whether to make a statutory assessment is described in Chapter Seven. The criteria, which LEAs may adopt in deciding whether to issue a statement for a particular child, are set out in Chapter Eight.

Regular liaison between the LEA and schools should ensure that there is clarity about the information required by the Authority when an assessment is requested. By the time the head teacher considers asking for statutory assessment of a child's special educational needs, the school should be able to provide written evidence of or information about:

- the school's action through *School Action* and *School Action Plus*
- individual education plans for the pupil
- records of regular reviews and their outcomes
- the pupil's health including the child's medical history where relevant
- National Curriculum levels
- attainments in literacy and mathematics
- educational and other assessments, for example from an advisory specialist support teacher or an educational psychologist
- views of the parents and of the child
- involvement of other professionals
- any involvement by the social services or education welfare service.

The description of the child's learning difficulty and progress together with information about the special educational provision made will form the basis on which the LEA can consider whether a statutory assessment is necessary. If the LEA's support services and, in particular, the LEA's educational psychologists have already been involved in assessing the child and reviewing provision, the LEA should be able to decide relatively quickly whether a statutory assessment is necessary. In the meantime – and whilst any subsequent statutory assessment is being made – the child should continue to be supported through *School Action Plus*.