



network 81

A guide to

***Annual Reviews and
Changing Schools***

*A national network of parents
working towards properly resourced
inclusive education for children with
special needs*

This leaflet aims to explain the procedures of the annual review, the transitional review and changing schools.

What is an annual review?

If a child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs then it has to be reviewed annually. The Local Education Authority (LEA) must ensure that the annual review is carried out within 12 months of making a statement and then every 12 months after that. A meeting is held so that once a year the parents, pupil, LEA, school and all the other professionals involved get together to discuss the progress that has been made, review the provision that is in place for the child and consider how appropriate the statement is.

What is the annual review procedure?

The LEA writes to the head teacher in advance to tell him/her when the report of the annual review meeting is required. The head teacher will then write to the parents, giving them a date for the meeting and also asking them for their written comments on how they feel their child is progressing and whether they have any concerns etc. The head teacher will also ask any

professional specified by the LEA and anyone else he considers appropriate for a report. If parents feel that there is a professional involved whose report could be helpful to the review process then they can ask the head teacher to include this report. Once the head teacher has received the reports they should be circulated to all involved in the meeting. The reports will form the basis for discussion at the meeting.

Parents should receive copies of **all** reports at least **2 weeks before** the meeting. If you are given any additional reports on arrival, request 15 minutes to read them before the meeting starts.

Remember that as parents you can take a Befriender or Independent Parental Supporter with you to the meeting to give you support and to take notes on your behalf.

What happens at the meeting?

The annual review meeting will normally take place at the child's school and should be chaired by the head teacher or the teacher to whom responsibility for the school-based elements of the review has been delegated.

The meeting will use the reports as the basis for discussion and will look at the following:

Does the statement remain appropriate?

Are any amendments to the statement required?

Should the LEA continue to maintain the statement, or should the LEA be recommended to cease to maintain the statement?

The review meeting may recommend amendments if:

1. *Significant new evidence has emerged which is not recorded on the statement.*
2. *Significant needs recorded on the statement are no longer present.*
3. *The provision should be amended to meet the child's changing needs and the targets specified at the review meetings; or*
4. *The child should change schools, either at the point of transfer between school phases eg. primary to secondary; or when a child's needs would be more appropriately met in a different school.*

What happens after the meeting?

The head teacher must prepare a report which summarises the outcome of the meeting, any educational targets for the coming year and any recommendations of amendments to the statement. This report must be sent to all concerned in the review, including the parents and any relevant professional.

The LEA will then review the statement in light of the head teacher's report and decide whether to accept the head teacher's recommendations. In particular the LEA must decide whether to amend or cease to maintain the statement and within one week of making a decision, the LEA must send a copy of its decision to the school, the child's parents and anyone else they think appropriate.

What happens at Year 9 reviews?

The annual review that occurs in year 9 and any subsequent years until your child leaves school should include a Transition Plan which will bring together information from a range of individuals within and beyond school in order to make plans for the young person's transition to adult life.

What is different about this review?

The head teacher – must involve the Connexions Service in the review meeting to enable all options for continuing education, careers and occupational training to be considered.

The Connexions Personal Adviser – must attend the Year 9 review meetings and any subsequent meetings.

The head teacher – must invite Social Services to attend the reviews so that any assessment under the Disabled Persons Act (1986) can be made.

The young person themselves – should be involved in the meeting and consulted about what their aspirations are for the future.

A Transition Plan – must be drawn up in consultation with the Connexions Service.

What is the Connexions Service?

The Connexions Service took over the role of the Careers Service from April 2001. The role is to assist the young person and their parents to identify the most appropriate post-16 provision, provide counselling and support and have continuing oversight of and information on the young person's choice of provision.

Changing Schools

Changing schools is a very important and sometimes worrying time for both parents and children. Timing and early planning are the keys to a successful change of school.

Transferring from Early Education to Primary

Having had a successful early education placement the school and parents should begin looking at possible transfers at the annual review prior to the year in which the child transfers. If your annual review falls in the first 6 months of the year, ask for the next review meeting to take place in the Autumn term. With your consent, your child's records will be passed on to the primary school to help ensure support is consistent and the transfer is as smooth as possible.

Secondary Transfer

The transfer between primary and secondary should be considered in the year prior to transfer i.e. **Year 5**. This ensures that parents of children with special educational needs can consider future educational options at the same time as all other parents. The child's statement should then

be amended by the **15th February** of the year of transfer i.e. Year 6. All the arrangements for a child's placement should therefore be completed no later than the beginning of March before transfer. When your child transfers from primary to secondary their records will be passed on within 15 days of your child leaving the primary school.

Choosing a school?

When looking for a school transfer, it is important to visit all the possible schools in your area and make an appointment to talk to the SENCO about your child. You should also consider:

- The number of children on the school roll
- The size of the classes
- Distance and means of travel
- Physical access to buildings
- Ask to see the school's policy on special educational needs
- Talk to other parents.

If you are uncertain which school to choose,

contact your local Special Educational Needs Officer or Parent Partnership Service, who should be able to guide you on possibilities and may even pave the way for you by initially making contact with the school on your behalf.

Remember

If the LEA are recommending a placement you disagree with you have the right to appeal to the Tribunal against their decision.

Likewise the LEA has to consider the preference made by a parent and they have a duty to meet that preference and to discuss it with the school. (Schedule 27, Education Act 1996).

The LEA has the power to name a school on a statement which they consider is right for a child to transfer to and the governing body have a duty to admit that child. (1996 Education Act Section 324 (5) (B)).

When you have made your choice of school.

When you have made your choice of school, ask for the SENCO of the school you wish your child to transfer to, to be invited to your child's review meeting.

Practical Steps to Consider:

1 Make sure before the review discussing transfer of school that you are aware of how the system in your authority operates.

2 Plan visits to possible schools carefully. A visit could include:

Meeting the school SENCO

Touring the school

Discussion on how information is passed between schools

Ask for a copy of the school's prospectus and look carefully at the special needs section

Find out about the school's admission policy

Find out how all the teachers will be made aware of your child's needs and how all staff work together to produce appropriate understanding in all lessons. This is particularly important in secondary school.

3 Once you have chosen your school and completed any appropriate forms these will be sent to the Local Authority and to your chosen school. You should also write to your

Local Authority's Special Needs Department stating the school of your choice and the reasons for your choice.

- 4 The appeal system for children with statements to be admitted to their chosen school is via a Special Educational Needs & Disability Tribunal. The local school appeal system does not apply.
- 5 Always seek support if you are not clear about your child's transfer arrangements. Talk your situation through with a knowledgeable local support group or a national parents support service.

This leaflet only gives basic details of the procedures involved. Further information is available from our helpline [0870 770 3306](tel:08707703306) or in:

Network 81 Parents Guide – how to get support for your child with special educational needs.

Available from Network 81 – [0870 770 3306](tel:08707703306)



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