



network 81

How to get

extra help

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

This leaflet aims to explain how schools identify and help children with special educational needs.

Are you concerned about your child's progress at school?

If you are concerned about your child's progress at school or the school has told you that they are concerned, then the first step is to talk to your child's teacher. S/he may also ask you to talk to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) at the school. The SENCO is the teacher who is in charge of special educational needs in the school.

Discussions with schools

When you go to a meeting in school to discuss your child's progress, it is possible to take a friend with you to the meeting to give you support. Network 81 has a national network of Befrienders ready to help and support you.

The best way to get the most out of a meeting is to be well prepared. The types of questions you could ask include:

What progress is my child making compared to other pupils?

What kind and amount of additional help is my child receiving?



Can I be of any help with the support being offered?

Can I visit the school on an agreed regular basis to review the support and progress being made?

It is also important to talk about any difficulties, including the health and behaviour of your child, that you may be having at home.

Ask your friend or befriender to take notes of the meeting for you and before leaving the meeting always be clear about what is going to happen after the meeting has ended. If you are unsure, ask for clarification.

How can the school help?

There are two ways in which schools can help to support your child's progress at school. They are '*School Action*' and '*School Action Plus*'.

School Action

The SENCO will assess your child's difficulties and will then decide what support is needed to help your child progress. S/he will ask you and your child's teacher what you feel your child's difficulties are. The SENCO will write an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which should include targets, what strategies are going to be used, what provision is going to be put in place and when the plan is going to be reviewed. This should be discussed fully with you and your child and should be reviewed at least twice a year.

School Action Plus

If your child continues to have difficulties despite the strategies used, including the I.E.P., then the school can ask for extra help from external support services e.g. an educational psychologist, specialist teacher etc. The specialist may advise the school, they may do further assessment or they may work with your child directly. A new I.E.P. will be written which should be regularly reviewed.

Statutory Assessment

For a few children, despite all the help given by the school, they may still not make progress. At this point, the school in consultation with parents may ask the Local Education Authority (LEA) for a statutory assessment. Parents also have the right to ask for statutory assessment themselves.

A statutory assessment is a very detailed examination of what your child's needs are and what help your child needs. The LEA will ask for information from parents and the professionals working with your child eg. specialist teachers, speech and language therapists etc.

How long will the assessment take?

The 2001 Education Regulations (in which this procedure is described) set out time limits for this procedure. The process of making a statutory assessment and a statement should take 26 weeks.

Time Limits

Considering whether a statutory assessment is necessary	6 weeks
Making the assessment	10 weeks
Drafting the proposed statement or note in lieu	2 weeks
Finalising the statement	8 weeks
Total	26 weeks

There are a number of reasons why the assessment may take longer than the strict 26 week guide, but even if one part of the assessment is delayed (eg. collecting reports from other agencies), the remaining parts of the procedure should still comply with the guidelines.

Once the assessment is complete, the LEA will decide whether or not to issue a proposed Statement of Special Educational Needs or a Note in Lieu. A Statement is a legal document that describes all your child's needs and what provision should be made to meet those needs. A Note in Lieu should give the LEA's reasons for not issuing a statement and will include copies of the reports on which their decision is based.

If you receive a proposed statement, you should check it very carefully to ensure that you are happy

with the detailed description of your child's needs and the provision which should be made to meet those needs. This is described in Parts 2 and 3 of the statement. Once the statement is finalised, the LEA has a duty to meet the provision set out in it.

What is an Annual Review?

All children who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs must have their statement reviewed at least annually. The annual review meeting is usually held at the child's school. Remember you can take someone with you to the review meeting to give you support and take notes on your behalf. You should also have received copies of all reports and assessments that will be used in the review at least 2 weeks before the meeting. If you are given any extra reports on arrival, ask for 15 minutes to read them through before the meeting starts. Always make sure you know who everyone is at the meeting.

The purpose of the review is to see how your child has been progressing; what targets have been met and what new targets need to be set; and whether an amendment of the statement is needed.

What is a Tribunal?

The Special Educational Needs & Disability Tribunal is an independent body that will hear parental appeals against LEA decisions on statutory

assessment, statements and disability discrimination. When considering appeals to a Tribunal, parents may need the advice of an independent organisation. Network 81 can provide information for parents on Tribunal procedures and offer the help of other voluntary organisations if needed.

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

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

Available from Network 81 – 0870 7703306

Special Educational Needs – a guide for parents (DfES).

Available from DfES Publications – 0845 6022260

Special Education Handbook – the law on children with special educational needs.

Available from the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE). – 0808 800 5793

Special Educational Needs & Disability
Tribunal Helplines:

SEN – 0870 241 2555

Disability Discrimination – 0870 606 5750



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