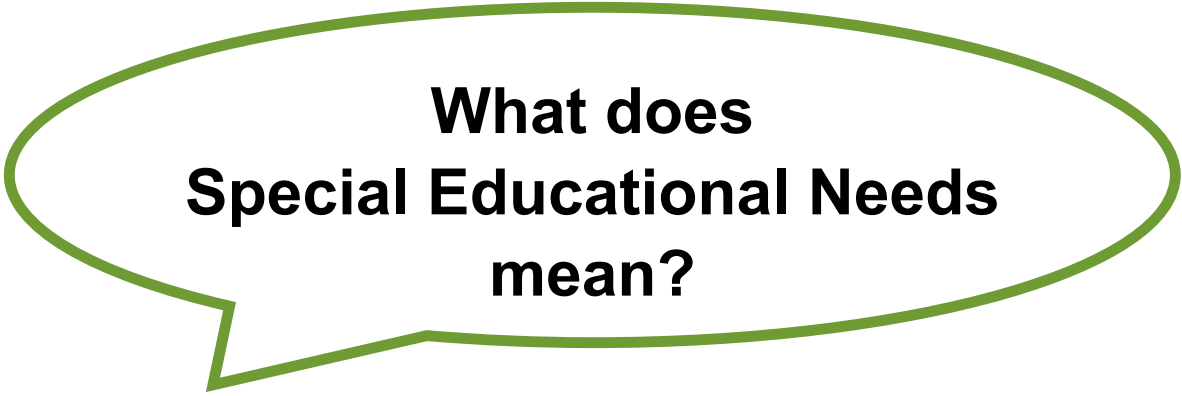




simple explanations of words used by
schools and professionals who support
children with special educational needs

written by parents for parents



What does Special Educational Needs mean?

Children with special educational needs all have some difficulty or disability that makes it harder for them to learn than most children of a similar age.

These children may need extra or different help from that given to other children. The term 'special educational needs' is often shortened to 'SEN'.

At some time in their lives about one in five school children will have SEN, some for most or all of their school life and others for shorter periods. Sometimes children need only a little more help, but at other times they need significantly more help than other children without those difficulties.

If a child makes sufficient progress they may only need SEN support for a short time, sometimes just a few months.

At first, terms used in SEN can be confusing to parents.

A to Z of SEN Terms

Base, Special Unit, Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP), Additionally Resourced Centre (ARC)

A base is a unit offering support for specific types of SEN children and is usually attached to a mainstream school. At times it may be referred to as a Special Unit, ARP or ARC. All of these terms mean the same thing.

If a school has a base, this means that quite a few children in the school have a similar type of SEN and the school employs specially trained staff to help these children. There will be other children in the school with SEN who are not attached to the base.

Children attached to a base normally have a Statement of SEN (see section 'S') and have a flexible programme of teaching either in the base or in mainstream classes with appropriate support. Access to specific therapy will depend upon the provision specified in the child's Statement of SEN.

Connexions (SEN)

Connexions SEN personal advisors support young people with Statements (see section 'S') aged 13 –25 during their transition into adult life and can be contacted through the Parent Partnership Service (see section 'P').

Curriculum, National Curriculum

This is the basic work that children of each age group are expected to be taught in school. Within the National Curriculum, targets are set for each child and progress is measured.

Differentiated Curriculum

Differentiated curriculum means that schoolwork is taught in different ways and at different speeds within each mainstream class in order to make allowance for all ability levels.

A teacher may differentiate work by providing different worksheets and placing children in small groups. SEN implies educational needs above and beyond this.

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Some children with SEN may also be disabled.

Disability Discrimination

Every school has to make sure that a child with a disability is helped to take part in the same activities that are open to everybody else, for example, school trips, preparation for exams, sports, taking part in assembly, school plays and being taught the whole National Curriculum.

The law says that schools must do everything they can to avoid treating disabled children differently or making them feel as if they are not included in school in the same way as others, perhaps even excluded from an aspect of school life.

If a child is treated unfairly in any of these ways, it is called Disability Discrimination.

Early Years Action

Please see “School Action” under section ‘S’.

Early Years Action Plus

Please see “School Action” under section ‘S’.

Educational Psychologist (EP)

Educational Psychologists are registered with the Health Professions Council and have experience in teaching or education. Educational Psychologists work with individual children, parents, schools and other professionals.

The Local Authority employs EP’s to provide consultation to schools concerning children’s special educational needs (SEN). They can assess children and suggest ways to help if they have additional learning needs. There are also independent (private) educational psychologists.

Exclusion

If a child behaves in a violent or offensive way or refuses to follow important rules, a school or nursery can insist that he or she must be kept at home for a short time, from one day up to a

maximum of 45 in any school year. This is called “fixed term exclusion”, “fixed period exclusion” or “suspension”.

In extreme circumstances, schools or nurseries have the right to insist that a child does not return to the school or nursery but is educated elsewhere. This is called “permanent exclusion”.

Schools will warn parents that they might permanently exclude the child and must make efforts to resolve the behaviour issues before deciding to permanently exclude.

Pupils with a Statement of SEN (see section ‘S’) should only be excluded in the most exceptional circumstances when other options, including calling review meetings, have been exhausted.

The school or nursery will contact parents as soon as they decide to exclude a child and will follow up with a formal letter of explanation.

Parents can appeal against any type of exclusion using the school or nursery’s appeals process.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the policy of allowing all children to be taught in a mainstream school with extra support if necessary.

Every parent has the right to send their child to a mainstream school and have extra help delivered there, with a few exceptions.

For some children, Special Schools are more appropriate. Parents have the right to express a preference for a Special School (see section 'S').

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An IEP is an important document for parents and staff. It states those specific things your child should be able to do as a result of receiving extra support. It shows a small number of things your child should achieve and how they should achieve them.

Parents will be asked to approve the IEP. Every IEP target should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-related, or "SMART" for short. It is an important planning,

teaching and assessment tool which should identify the staff working with the child together with the amount of support.

Learning Support Assistant (LSA); Teaching Assistant (TA)

These are names given to classroom support staff; terms will vary between schools. Children with SEN may have extra help from an LSA or TA. There are also higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs).

There may be one adult just for your child or an adult looking after a number of SEN children in the same class or school.

LSAs should be sufficiently trained in SEN techniques to help the set of children allocated to him or her.

These support staff work under the direction of the class teacher. LSAs, TAs and HLTAs receive support, training and guidance from the school SENCO and may develop expertise in certain specific areas such as behaviour or reading support.

Local Authority (LA)

The Local Authority, also known as “Merton” or “the Council”, runs our local services. The Children, Schools and Families Department is responsible for schools. The Local Authority website address is *www.merton.gov.uk*

Mainstream School

This means a state school and not a special school.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

Occupational Therapists recommend assistance or special equipment for skills which may be difficult for a child such as co-ordination, balance, walking, dressing and using pencils.

OTs normally are employed by the Health Service or Primary Care Trust (PCT). There are also independent (private) occupational therapists.

Parent Partnership Service

By law every Local Authority has to have a Parent Partnership Service to provide impartial advice to parents about SEN.

In Merton, there is one Parent Partnership Officer who can be contacted on 020 8543 8671. He can visit parents at home, accompany parents to school interviews, attend annual reviews and provide information about SEN and schools.

In addition to having links with both local and national voluntary groups, he advises parents of their right to meet with LA Officers to resolve disagreements and their right to access the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).

In Merton, the Parent Partnership Officer is employed by the SEN Department within the Children, School and Families Department of the Local Authority but is based in separate offices.

Physiotherapist

A physiotherapist can help children with movement problems including walking, running, balancing, muscle and joint problems and overall body strength. They may suggest exercises, massage, or special equipment to help children to move as well as possible.

They are normally employed by the Health Service or PCT and also work in schools. There are also independent (private) physiotherapists.

Policies and other documents

A policy is a document setting out how things will or are meant to be done. Merton has a SEN policy which guides each school's policy, and it makes clear that:-

- Parents are to be informed when a child is identified as having special educational needs
- Parents will be informed of the Parent Partnership service
- Parents will be given clear information about the support to be provided to the child

A school policy is a document explaining certain school rules or the way that the school intends to do certain things. Schools must make the following documents available to parents upon request:

- School SEN Policy
- School Disability Equality Scheme
- School Complaints Procedure
- School Prospectus

- Name and contact details of the school's SEN Governor (see section 'S')
- Name and contact details of the school SENCO (see section 'S')

Provision Map

A provision map shows exactly what extra SEN support is provided to specific groups of children who have similar difficulties.

The document may be broken down by class or school year and it will explain how often specific support is given and for how long. However, it does not contain individual attainment targets, so although children are named on this document, it is more general than an IEP.

School Action, School Action Plus, Early Years Action, Early Years Action Plus

These terms refer to the various levels of extra support which SEN children may receive. Extra money is provided to schools and nurseries for supporting children at these levels of need. Children receiving this support usually have an IEP.

Early Years Action means a child has been identified as needing some extra support because their progress is slower than expected in pre-school or nursery.

School Action means a child has been identified as needing some extra support because their progress is slower than expected in school.

Early Years Action Plus means that a child needs a higher level of support in pre-school or nursery. Normally, the child will have been on Early Years Action but has not made satisfactory progress. Usually, the school provides extra resources for this and outside experts have to be consulted.

School Action Plus means that a child needs a higher level of support in school. Normally, the child will have been on School Action but has not made satisfactory progress. Usually, the school provides extra resources for this and outside experts have to be consulted.

SEN Governor

In each school, one member of the Governing Body has special responsibility for overseeing SEN matters.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)

This is the member of staff with responsibility for all SEN activities in school. SENCOs are responsible for making sure that SEN children have the best chance of reaching their full potential by providing appropriate support in school.

The SENCO is responsible for ensuring good SEN practice including appropriate contacts with parents. Their role includes making sure that you, as a parent, have opportunities to speak about your child and that you are listened to.

From September 2009, all new SENCOs, and from September 2010, all SENCOs will have been trained on a Government accredited SENCO training course.

Special School

A Special School is devoted to meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and sometimes specialises in one particular type or complexity of need.

Special schools have more staff with experience in SEN than mainstream schools (see section 'M'). They may also have additional specialist staff working in the school, such as Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists (see sections 'S' and 'O').

Speech and Language Therapist (SLT or SALT)

This is a specialist who can help children with communication and speech problems including:

- Difficulty in learning to speak, or speaking clearly
- Difficulty in forming sentences
- Difficulty in communicating with others, lack of interest in communicating with others or poor play skills
- Difficulty in understanding spoken language

For children under 5 years old, this help is usually provided in a hospital, clinic or children's centre.

For children aged 5 or older, it can be delivered in school. SLTs are usually employed by the Health Service (PCT) but some are employed by schools. There are also independent (private) SLTs.

Statement of Special Educational Needs or Statement

A Statement is a legal document divided into six parts and reviewed each year (formally called an Annual Review) that lists a child's special educational needs and exactly how they are to be met.

When a child does not make adequate progress on School Action Plus (see section 'S'), has complex or long-lasting needs, and there is very substantial difficulty in "accessing education" (i.e. being educated), the child's school, or another professional involved with the child, may recommend that the Local Authority assesses a child for a Statement. Parents can also apply directly to the Local Authority for their child to be assessed.

The Statementing process follows a rigorous formal procedure and strict criteria must be met.

Decisions about your child may be taken by a group of professionals from schools and the Local Authority, called an SEN Panel. For more information, see the further reading section towards the end of the leaflet.

Transition

Post-16 transition refers to the period during which a young person with a Statement of SEN moves into adult life which is between ages 13 and 25.

A Transition Plan is drawn up to make sure this period of change is as smooth as possible. The transition process begins with the year 9 Annual Review of a child's Statement (see section 'S').

If you are reading this you may well be a parent or a carer of a child in need of some extra help. The good news is that a lot of expertise can be brought in to assist when a child has problems with learning or other difficulties.

Thank you for reading this leaflet, and if you think your child might need some extra help, please speak to the class teacher or someone else mentioned in this leaflet who will help you.

This leaflet was produced by Kids First, Merton's Forum for Parents of Children and Young People with Disabilities or Special Needs (a project of Merton Mencap) in conjunction with Merton's Parent Partnership Officer and Merton's SEN & Inclusion Service.

You can obtain more copies of this leaflet by contacting Kids First on:

Email kids.first@swlondonmencap.nhs.uk

Telephone 020 8687 4644



Further Reading

Merton Local Authority SEN information

www.merton.gov.uk/learning/edinclusion/edspecialneeds.htm

Merton Family Information Service

www.merton.gov.uk/community/familyinfo.htm

ACE (Advisory Centre for Education)

www.ace-ed.org.uk

IPSEA

www.ipsea.org.uk

National Parent Partnership Network

www.parentpartnership.org.uk

Network 81

www.network81.org

Kids First

www.kids-first.org.uk

By law, Local Authorities and schools must have regard to the SEN Code of Practice which you can order by

- telephoning 0845 6022260
- emailing your request to dcsf@prolog.uk.com, quoting reference DCSF 581/2001
- downloading it from www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3724

The Code of Practice gives further details about how SEN children should be supported in schools.

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