

Parent Partnership
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 1RF
Tel: 01628 683182
Email: parent.partnership@rbwm.gov.uk



PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

Information Sheet 4

What are Special Educational Needs (SEN)?

Your child may be described as having SEN if he or she has

- developmental delay
- a known disability or health problem
- speech and language delay or disorder
- behaviour difficulties which affect their ability to learn
- learning difficulties

Many children (perhaps as many as 1 in 5) will have a special educational need at some time and these needs will usually be met in their early education setting, perhaps a nursery, pre school or school. Sometimes outside specialists may give help. In a few cases the Local Education Authority (LEA) may be asked to provide extra help, perhaps by carrying out a statutory assessment of the child's needs¹.

What is an early education setting?

An early education setting is somewhere that provides education to young children and may receive funding from central government to do this. This can include:

- maintained (state) mainstream and special schools
- independent schools
- non-maintained special schools
- maintained nursery schools
- other registered daycare providers such as pre-schools, playgroups and private day nurseries including Montessori settings
- accredited child minders working as part of an approved National Childminding Association network.

All settings which are in receipt of the government funding (except specialist provision) will be expected to have a member of staff who acts as 'special

1. See information sheet, 'I Think my Child has Special Educational Needs....'

needs co-ordinator' (SENCo). This can be the head of the setting. The Early Years SENCo should have responsibility for:

- ensuring liaison with parents and other professionals in respect of children with SEN
- advising and supporting other practitioners in the setting
- ensuring that appropriate Individual Education Plans² are in place
- ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with SEN is collected, recorded and updated

Windsor and Maidenhead have a designated Area SENCo in a development and training role who supports the SENCo in the individual settings.

How is support provided?

Once a child has been identified as having SEN the setting should provide an appropriate programme that is additional to or different from the programme usually provided for all the children in the setting. This is known as **Early Years Action** and can be triggered if you or the setting are concerned that your child

- is making little or no progress
- continues to work, in particular areas, at a level significantly below those expected for children of a similar age
- has ongoing emotional and/or behavioural difficulties which have not improved after using behavioural management approaches
- has sensory or physical difficulties and has made little or no progress despite the provision of personal aids and equipment
- has communication and/or social difficulties and needs some individual support in order to learn

An ²Individual Education Plan (IEP) should be written for the child. This has details of the short term targets, the teaching strategies and any provision to be put in place. The IEP should be discussed with you and reviewed regularly (at least 3 times a year)

At the IEP review if it is felt that the child is not making enough progress in spite of the additional help, then a decision might be made to bring in professionals from outside the setting. These outside professionals, who could include an educational psychologist, specialist teacher, or speech and language therapist, will sometimes work directly with the child but are often more likely to provide advice to the setting on how best to support individual children. If outside professionals are involved, the child is said to be on **Early Years Action Plus** and the IEP should include details of their involvement.

2. See information sheet on IEPs

For a very few children, help given in the ways described above may not be enough for them to make satisfactory progress. For these children a statutory assessment of SEN (sometimes called statementing) might be required. Parents, school and some settings¹ can ask the LEA to carry out this multi professional assessment.

What is statutory school age?

Statutory school age means the age when parents have a duty to make sure that their child goes to school. In England this is from the **term after the child's 5th birthday until June of the academic year in which they reach the age of 16 (usually Y11).**

Do very young children with SEN get support?

Children with serious learning difficulties benefit greatly from early help with their education. You may wish to discuss any concerns with your Health Visitor, Doctor or other childcare worker you may know.

What if the LEA feels my child doesn't need a statutory assessment but does need additional help?

Young children's needs change very quickly, and in some instances the LEA may decide to support your child without formal assessment.

Additional information

www.parentcentre.gov.uk at home page click on publications

Resources for parents by parents

'Help your children to learn' series of booklets published by Department for Education and Skills (DfES)