

## **PART B: INFORMATION ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION**

### **SECTION 13.A: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION**

#### **13.1 What are 'Special Educational Needs'?**

It has been estimated that about one child in every five may have some form of special educational needs during his/her school life. Usually such difficulties are not severe and are short term and can be dealt with by school staff, sometimes with the help of outside specialists. Sometimes children may have educational difficulties which are complex and severe. They may have moderate or severe learning difficulties, a specific learning difficulty, physical, visual or hearing difficulties or significant behavioural/emotional problems. They may suffer from a combination of such difficulties.

#### **13.2 How are Special Educational Needs identified?**

Children's special educational needs may be identified through a number of sources:

- School doctor, school nurse, medical officer
- School staff, such as the child's teacher, or the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator)
- Educational psychologist, education welfare officer, social worker

In all cases, the parents/carers should be involved before any action is taken.

#### **13.3 What provision is made for children with Special Educational Needs?**

The SEN code of Practice recommends that schools meet children's special educational needs through a graduated response. The Code suggests that schools should intervene through School Action and School Action Plus before asking the Local Authority (LA) to consider carrying out a statutory assessment. School staff will talk to you about your child's special educational needs and keep you fully involved throughout the process.

In most cases the school, working with the LA support services, will be able to identify, assess and support children with special educational needs. LA support services can offer advice, support and guidance on meeting a wide range of needs within the following categories:

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognition and Learning
- Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development
- Sensory and/or Physical Needs

Schools must consider what the Code of Practice says when they draw up their policies for children with special educational needs and must include the name of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, or SENCO, within the school's policy.

### 13.4 What is a 'Statutory Assessment' and a 'Statement of Special Educational Needs'?

Where it appears that the child's special educational needs are likely to be severe or complex, schools and/or parents/carers may request a **Statutory Assessment** and this process then follows a standard procedure set out in the Education Act 1996. The views of parents/carers will be requested, and they have the right to be involved throughout the statutory assessment process. The LA will seek advice/information from a range of professionals during the process – such as teachers, medical staff, social care staff, educational psychologists.

Once this information has been gathered, the LA will consider it and decide how the child's needs might best be met. If special educational provision is required, the LA will issue a 'proposed' **Statement of Special Educational Needs**. This will outline the child's special educational needs and the provision that needs to be made. Each assessment report about the child's needs and the written comments provided by parents/carers will form part of the proposed Statement.

When parents/carers receive a copy of the proposed Statement, they will be asked to express a preference for the school that they would like their child to attend.

A Statutory Assessment may lead to agreement that the child's special educational needs can be met in a mainstream school, perhaps with the assistance of a specialist teacher from a support service or with additional Teaching Assistant (TA) support. For children with a statement of special educational needs who attend a mainstream school, the school must continue to make provision at School Action Plus. The school must also make provision of up to 15 hours in accordance with the statement. This funding is referred to as Pupil and School Support. For children with High Level Need, who require in excess of School Action Plus and Pupil and School Support, the LA will make this additional provision, according to assessed need and in accordance with the statement. Sometimes it will be clear that the child would be best placed in the school's special needs support group or department, where the school is large enough to have one.

Alternatively, the Statutory Assessment may lead to the conclusion that the child's special educational needs can best be met by placement in a special school, or a specialist unit or class. A full list of these schools, classes and units is in [Section 13B](#).

If parents/carers disagree with the provision proposed for a child, the LA will reconsider all the evidence submitted as part of the Statutory Assessment process. Parental concerns will usually be resolved following meetings with an SEN officer from the LA. However, if agreement about placement cannot be reached, or if the LA does not agree that a Statement is necessary, parents/carers can then appeal to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal – an independent body set up to consider cases where parents and the LA cannot reach agreement.

### 13.5 School Placement

It is usually possible at an early stage for parents/carers to visit a school that may be able to meet their child's special educational needs. The date of admission will depend upon the availability of places. Assistance with travel will be considered where attendance at a particular school is considered to be appropriate.

On the rare occasions when it is not possible for the LA to make placements within its maintained schools it may be necessary to consider a school in the independent or non-maintained sector. Such placements may involve a residential element which will be made only with the agreement of parents/carers and Children's Services Social Care teams. Where such placements are made the school must be approved by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills under the terms of the Education Act 1996.

The LA will arrange for the progress of each child with a Statement of Special Educational Needs to be reviewed at least annually by the school. The Annual Review held during Year 9 is referred to as a Transition Plan meeting and is important in beginning to prepare for the child's transition into a post-16 setting, further education and adult life.

### **13.6 In conclusion**

When parents/carers consider that their child may have special educational needs their first step should be to discuss their concerns with staff of the school. Where a child is below school age parents/carers can discuss their concerns with the playgroup or nursery provider.

The most important laws dealing with special educational needs are the Education Act 1996 and the SEN and Disability Act 2001. The 1996 Act contains guidance on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs and relates to the Code of Practice. The SEN and Disability Act of 2001 provides parents/carers with a strengthened right to a mainstream education for children with special educational needs.

### **13.7 Educational support for pupils with behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools**

The LA Behaviour Support Team supports pupils with a wide range of emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It provides education in nine Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) across the County for pupils at Key Stages 1-4. Staff also offer a mainstream outreach support service to schools to help them manage the behaviour, emotional and/or social difficulties of pupils within the school context.

The PRUs primarily provide full time education for children who are permanently excluded from schools. They may also work alongside schools with those at risk of exclusion and those with extreme vulnerabilities. They provide pupils with the opportunity to reintegrate back into mainstream or special schools in a positive way. For older pupils PRU provision may be partially in a satellite base in a college. All pupils are encouraged to achieve accreditation at an appropriate level in a variety of skill areas.

The LA's Parent Partnership Service provides an effective and prompt response to parental enquiries and they can be contacted by various means:

Tel:	01905 727940
Fax:	01905 727949
Email:	<a href="mailto:ppservice@worcestershire.gov.uk">ppservice@worcestershire.gov.uk</a>
Web-site:	<a href="http://www.ppsworcs.co.uk">www.ppsworcs.co.uk</a>

The Service provides a comprehensive advice service free of charge.