

## **What to do if you suspect that your child has a Special Educational Need**

At some point in their school years, around 1 in 5 pupils up to the age of 16 years will have a special educational need. The vast majority of these will have their needs met by school. It is only approximately 2% of the pupil population that require an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to have their needs met. More detail can be found in “Shropshire Provision Guidance for SEND” - search “SEND provision” on the Shropshire Local Offer.

<http://new.shropshire.gov.uk/the-send-local-offer/>

### **So what is a Special Educational Need?**

The term Special Educational Needs (SEN) has a legal definition which is set out in the Children and families Act 2014. It applies to children who have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it significantly harder for them to learn or access education than most other children of their age.

### **Definition of Special Educational Needs**

Children have **special educational needs** if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

Children have a **learning difficulty** if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age;
- or
- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority.

A child under compulsory school age has special educational needs if he or she is likely to fall within the definition above when they reach compulsory school age or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them.

For children aged two or more, special educational provision is educational or training provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age by mainstream schools, maintained nursery schools, mainstream post-16 institutions or by relevant early years providers.

For a child under two years of age, special educational provision means educational provision of any kind.

Please note: Children must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught.

All teachers should “differentiate” the curriculum to enable their pupils to successfully access the curriculum. Differentiation means that because not all children learn in the same way or at the same rate, the curriculum needs to be adapted to the pace and method of those children’s different learning styles.

If your child has had this differentiated approach for some time and has not made enough progress then they may have a Special Educational Need.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years is a Government guide which ensures that children with SEN get the right support. It is available to view at

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/398815/SEND\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_January\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf)

## **What steps can I take if I feel my child may have SEN?**

1. Talk to the school – The best person to speak to is generally the teacher.
  - Do they suspect that your child is having any difficulties?
  - Is your child already receiving extra help?
  - Are they working at the same level as other pupils in their class?
  - Have they been involved in any type of assessment?
  - What are recent assessment results? Test scores?
  - How can your child be best supported at home?
  - Ask for a copy of your child’s school record, including any records of progress.
  - Ask for a copy of the school’s Special Educational Needs Policy and Behaviour Policy,

if appropriate.

- Explain what your concerns are.
- When did you first start to be concerned?
- Are the school aware of any doctor's appointments?
- Is the situation getting worse?
- Does anyone else in your family have similar problems?
- Are you giving "extra" support at home?
- Is there a pattern?
- Give examples.
- Give your child's views
- How does your child feel?
- Do they feel they are struggling?
- Are they happy?
- What changes would they like to enable them to access the curriculum?
- If possible ask your child to write something giving their views
- A meeting may be necessary - you may wish to formalise your meeting by putting all your concerns in a letter to school and then asking for an appointment to meet. This allows the school to prepare for the meeting by collecting relevant information and ensuring that the right people are at the meeting.
- It may help for you to make notes in advance of the meeting

## 2. Collect information

- Start a file  
Put all relevant paper (print off emails) correspondence in chronological order.  
Examples of these maybe notes of concern from the teacher, school test results and letters from a doctor. This will help you with gathering evidence which may be needed at a later date, but will also allow you to build up a picture of your child.
- Start a diary  
Make a note of concerns with education, any problems or changes in behaviour or health at home, any patterns or triggers.

## 3. Talk to Health Professionals, if appropriate.

- Your GP is a good place to start to discuss any concerns and they may be able to refer you on for specialist help.

- If the school identifies your child as having a special educational need they should have an early discussion with you and your child. This should be part of their information gathering on progress and development to gain a good understanding of the pupil's areas of strength and difficulty.

### **If you have had a meeting with school and were not happy with their response. What next?**

- Talk through any worries or concerns you might have with the people at the education setting: The class teacher, the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), Head of Year or the Head Teacher.
- Contact Shropshire Information, Advice and Support Service for independent and impartial advice and support.

### **Where can I get further information, advice or support?**

Contact the IASS team on:

**Phone:** 01743 280019 (Open 10am-4pm Monday—Friday)

**Web:** [www.cabshropshire.org.uk](http://www.cabshropshire.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/IASSShropshire](https://www.facebook.com/IASSShropshire)

**Email:** [iass@cabshropshire.org.uk](mailto:iass@cabshropshire.org.uk)

**Address:** Fletcher House, 15 College Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 1LY