



# **Starting Special School**

## **Information for Parents**

**What special school can offer your  
child**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THIS PACK**

Special schools provide education for children with particular types of special educational needs. There are expert staff with specific knowledge about special educational needs so you can be assured that all the adults working with your child understand what your child needs. Of course nobody knows your child as well as you do and the rest of this pack is intended to help make the transition to special school as smooth as possible for you, your child and your family.

This pack contains some information that we hope will help you with some of the changes that will be taking place in your lives as your child starts their new school.

One of the benefits special schools offers is the higher ratio of staff to pupils. As well as qualified teachers there will be many other professionals who all have specialist skills, knowledge of special educational needs and an understanding of children's needs. They could include:-

- Teaching assistants
- Higher level teaching assistants
- Speech and language trained staff
- Staff who have received training in administering medicines

## **SETTLING INTO SCHOOL**

- Starting a new school, is a big change for all children and your child will need to remember new names and get used to new ways.
- Whatever their personality or needs, starting a new school is likely to be a time that your child has to adjust to other people's way of doing things. Being a parent is never easy though and all parents find that at different times and for different reasons they need information and support.
- If you are concerned about anything, ask for a convenient time to talk to your child's class teacher or any of the other staff to see if any practical help can smooth the settling-in process for your child.
- Assessments, setting targets and planning for your child on an individual basis are going on all the time at special schools so as to make SURE that YOUR child achieves their personal best.
- Special schools teach the same subjects as all other schools but are specially geared to help children learn at their own level and in ways that will help them best. All the adults who are working with your child will be constantly assessing your child's skills, knowledge and understanding and will then be providing new learning activities that will help them to move on to learn new things - when they are ready.

## STATEMENTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

All children in special schools, except in very exceptional circumstances, will have a statement of special educational needs sets out all your child's needs and all the provision that will be made to meet those needs, including what professionals other than school staff will work with your child.

The DCSF have produced a comprehensive booklet “**SEN – A GUIDE FOR PARENTS**” that provides more detail.

## ANNUAL REVIEWS

By law, the local authority **must** regularly check your child's progress and make sure the statement continues to meet his or her needs. They must review your child's statement **at least** once a year, but they can review it more often if they think it is necessary.

Your child's school will have set targets for your child and the annual review will look at your child's progress towards those targets and agree new targets for the next year.

Your child's school will write to you, telling you the date of the review meeting and inviting you to attend. Before the meeting, the school will ask you to send in your views on your child's progress over the last year. Remember, your views are always important.

The school may also ask for the written views of other professionals who know and work with your child. Before the review meeting, the school will send you copies of all the views they have received.

The review meeting will normally be held in your child's school. You can take a friend or an adviser to that meeting. It is important that you go to the review meeting. Your child can also go along for at least part of the meeting. His or her views on progress in the past year, and hopes for the future, are important.

After the review meeting, the school will set new targets and send a report to the local authority so that they can review your child's statement. The school will make sure that you have a copy of the report. The local authority will decide whether any changes need to be made to your child's statement. They will then write to you, your child's school and the professionals involved in the annual review.

## **MOVING UP AND ON**

In Year 9 the annual review is the point where preparation for the move to further education and adult life really begins. The review meeting will cover all the same areas as in other years but also include discussion about the Transition Plan for your child's move to adult life. A Connexions Personal Advisor will have talked about a personal action plan with your child. Your comments will be valued and will be crucial in deciding the next stages of your child's life. There are many choices available after 16 and whatever the choice the Connexions Service will carry out assessments and make recommendations about the type and level of extra support that your child may need to be able to begin work, attend college or take part in work based training.

## **DIVERSITY IN SPECIAL SCHOOL SETTINGS**

These are some of the terms that may be written in the statement, depending on the nature of your child's identified special educational needs.

### **Cognition and Learning Needs**

Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)  
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)  
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)  
Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)

### **Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Needs**

Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulty (BESD)  
Specific Mental Health Needs

### **Communication and Interaction Needs**

Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN)  
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

### **Sensory needs**

Visual Impairment (VI)  
Hearing Impairment (HI)  
Multi-sensory Impairment (MSI)

### **Physical needs**

There are a number of medical conditions associated with physical disability which can impact on mobility, such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida and muscular dystrophy. Pupils with physical disabilities may also have associated sensory impairments, neurological problems or learning difficulties.

## **ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT**

There may be a range of people involved in your child's care and education. You may be familiar with some but others may be new to you. The only professionals who will definitely be involved in your child's education will be mentioned on your child's statement of educational needs.

**Your doctor** Your local doctor may be able to tell you about your child's condition and treatment. If they can't, your doctor will be able to refer your child to a specialist.

**Key worker** Some families have a key worker. A key worker will see you regularly and make sure you have all the information you need. Key workers can act as a central point of contact for professionals working with your family and share information where necessary.

**Paediatrician** Paediatricians are doctors who specialise in working with children.

**Paediatric occupational therapist** Paediatric occupational therapists specialise in working with children. They carry out assessments to see if your child would benefit from using specialist equipment like adapted cups, buggies or chairs and provide advice on lifting and handling your child safely.

**Communication support worker** A communication support worker works alongside teachers to provide sign language for young deaf children in nursery or school.

**Portage home visitor** Portage is a home-visiting educational service for pre-school children with special educational needs.

**Educational psychologist** An educational psychologist uses applied psychology to support individual children with special educational needs and the staff in the school working with them. They can assess your child's development, provide support and advice to the school.

**Independent Parental Supporters are people** to whom all parents should have access, if they so wish. The Independent Parental Supporter must be someone who can support parents for example by attending meetings, encouraging parental participation, and helping the parent understand the SEN framework. Independent means someone independent of the decision making process that determines the type and level of support for a child with special educational needs. Independent Parental Supporters will often be someone from a voluntary organisation, a parent partnership service, another parent or a friend.

**Peripatetic teacher (or specialist, advisory or support teacher)** A qualified teacher who has specialist expertise in different areas of special needs. They travel from school to school giving advice and support to the child and the school.

There are many national and voluntary organisations that help children with disabilities or learning difficulties, and their parents. Others offer more general advice. Some of the main organisations are listed below. You can get more details from your Local Authority, your local library, the Citizens' Advice Bureau or the local Council of Voluntary Service.

[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk) There are links to many areas around special needs and disability. You can get a copy of the SEN Code of Practice and a list of other useful publications from the DCSF, including "SEN a guide for parents".

DCSF Publications Centre  
PO Box 5050  
Sudbury  
Suffolk  
CO10 6ZQ

Telephone 0845 6022260  
Email - [publications.online@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:publications.online@dfes.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk) **Teachernet** was developed by the DCSF to support the education profession but contains all sorts of useful links that will help parents and anyone interested in learning and teaching.

SEN – a guide for parents is available to download in the SEN section on this website and you can also get a copy via the contact details for DCSF above.

[www.parentscentre.gov.uk](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk) **Parents Centre** is an official DCSF website for parents and carers offering information and support for parents on learning, choosing a school and finding childcare

DCSF  
Public Enquiry Unit  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith St  
London  
SW1P 3BT

Phone 0870 000 2288

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) **Directgov** brings together the widest range of public service information and services online. Directgov provides information from across UK government departments.

[www.familyandparenting.org](http://www.familyandparenting.org) The **Family and Parenting Institute** is a charity aiming to improve the wellbeing of children and families in the UK.

Family and Parenting Institute  
430 Highgate Studios  
53-79 Highgate Road  
London, NW5 1TL

Telephone: 020 7424 3460  
Fax 020 7485 3590



[www.cafamily.org](http://www.cafamily.org) **Contact a Family** provides advice, information and support to the parents of all disabled children.

209-211 City Rd  
London  
EC1V 1JN

FREEPHONE numbers

Helpline 0808 808 3555

Textphone 0808 808 3556

Monday to Friday 10 – 4 and Mondays between 5.30 and 7.30

Fax 020 7608 8701

[www.drc-gb.org/education](http://www.drc-gb.org/education) The **Disability Rights Commission** gives advice and information to disabled people, employers and service providers and supports disabled people in getting their rights under the DDA.

DRC Helpline

FREEPOST MID02164

Stratford upon Avon

CV37 9BR

Telephone: 08457 622 633

Textphone: 08457 622 644

8am and 8pm Monday to Friday

Fax: 08457 778 878

[www.dialuk.org.uk](http://www.dialuk.org.uk) **Dial UK** can put you in touch with local disability information and advice centres and services providers.

St Catherine's

Tickhill Road, Doncastor

South Yorkshire DN14 8QN

Telephone: 01302 310 123

Textphone: 01302 310 123

Fax: 01302 310 404

Email: [enquires@DIALuk.org.uk](mailto:enquires@DIALuk.org.uk)