

St Mary's



Information for Parents
about giving children extra help with learning

(Special Educational Needs)

Introduction

About one in every five children will need extra help at school at some time in their life. This is called having Special Educational Needs (SEN).

We want **all** children to have the opportunity to do their best, to be included with all the other children, and to be able to succeed in primary school, secondary school and as adults.

The extra help will be given in this school, sometimes with support from outside specialists such as educational psychologists. Sometimes, depending on a child's difficulties and how much progress they are making Westminster (the Local Educational Authority) may decide to write something called a 'Statement of Special Educational Needs.' This describes what the child's abilities and difficulties are, and describes what kinds of extra help the child will get. This could mean having a learning assistant, having some extra equipment, or having some individual or group work.

The Government's Department for Education has written a document for schools and parents which tells schools what they have to do to identify and help children with special educational needs, this is called the 'Special Educational Needs Code of Practice'



Basic Principles of the Code of Practice

- ◇ All children with Special Educational Needs should receive the help they need
- ◇ These needs will normally be met in mainstream (ordinary) schools
- ◇ Most of the help that a child needs should be available without a "statement" but where a child needs more help than other children, a statement will make sure the child gets the help s/he needs.
- ◇ The views of the child must be listened to
- ◇ Parents are very important in helping their children's education
- ◇ Children with special needs have the right to learn a wide variety of subjects (including the National Curriculum).

What are Special Educational Needs?

A child has special educational needs if he, or she, has:

- a learning difficulty (for example, dyspraxia)
- significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children at the same age
- a disability that prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for children of the same age
 - ◇ a physical disability
 - ◇ a problem with sight, hearing or speech
 - ◇ a mental disability
 - ◇ emotional or behavioural problems

What can I do if I think my child has SEN?

Talk to your child's class teacher, to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or to our Learning Mentor. Our SENCO is Alison Bowden and our Learning Mentor is Sheelagh Leith.

The sooner we find out a child needs extra help the better, so that we can start providing that help.

What will St Mary's do?

The class teacher, SENCO and/or Learning Mentor will work with you, the parents, to provide support and information.

Our Learning Mentor, Sheelagh Leith, offers a parent drop-in every Tuesday afternoon in the parents/music room from 2.45 pm. Information about various support agencies and services is available there. Sheelagh also has individual appointments with parents on Thursday mornings, between 9 o'clock and 10 o'clock.

We will follow the SEN code of practice and help your child in a series of small steps.

If teachers, or parents, are concerned about a child's progress a 'Concerns Form' is completed with you, the parents, and passed on to the SENCO or Learning Mentor. Concerns are identified and monitored.

Initial discussion of the child's needs will result in the child being supported at one of two levels: School Action or

School Action Plus. These are government categories and come from the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.

School Action

(or 'Early Years Action' for children younger than 5 years old)

This is when your child will need additional or different help in the classroom. The school SENCO, SEN teacher and/or learning mentor may help your child and/or support the class teacher. If the child is under five, the health visitor might be called. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be written. This will suggest some targets for your child to achieve, what teachers will do to help and a date when we will have a meeting to see how your child has progressed.

School Action Plus

(or 'Early Years Action Plus' for children younger than 5 years old)

If your child is still not making satisfactory progress, then specialists who do not work at St Mary's School will be asked for advice. A new IEP will be written using that advice, and we will watch your child's progress



Request for a Statement (Statutory Assessment)

In exceptional circumstances, if support at School Action and School Action Plus have not helped enough then you, or the school, or an outside agency (like the Health Authority) can request the assessment.

This request is considered by a group of people called a 'Joint SEN Panel.' They decide whether a statutory assessment should be carried out. If a statutory assessment is considered to be the right thing to do the LEA will collect information about your child from you, from the school and from any other people who can describe your child (like a doctor). You will be given information, advice and guidance while this is happening by the case officer from Westminster.

A decision will be made about whether the Statement will be written. If a Statement is written, a draft explaining what will be provided for your child will be given to you and the school asking for comments before it is finalised. The whole process will take from 10-26 weeks. The statement has to be reviewed every year to see if any changes should be made. If the LEA decides not to give a Statement, you can appeal through the special needs tribunal against the decision.

When your child transfers to secondary school there will be special arrangements for any child who has a Statement. All of our staff: class teachers, the SENCO, the Learning Mentor and Headteacher are happy to discuss any queries or concerns that you may have. You can also contact the school's Special Educational Needs Governor if you want to.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO):

Alison Bowden

Learning Mentor:

Sheelagh Leith

Special Educational Needs Support Teacher:

JT Thomas

Reading Recovery Teacher

Kyra Sheppard

Special Educational Needs Governor:

Catherine Slater

Glossary

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| LEA: | Local Education Authority. |
| SEN: | Special Educational Need(s). |
| SENCO: | Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. <i>The school's SENCO co-ordinates the support for children with SEN.</i> |
| SENCOP: | Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. <i>This government document outlines the school's and LEA's duties and what parents and children are entitled to.</i> |
| IEP: | Individual Educational Plan. <i>This is a document that lists targets for a child with SEN and the strategies used for teaching. This is reviewed termly.</i> |
| STATEMENT: | <i>A 'Statement of Special Educational Needs' is a statutory document and details the needs of a child with the support necessary to meet those needs. It is like a very detailed IEP, but the provision in the Statement is statutory.</i> |

You can get advice from 'Pan (Parents' Advocacy Network) Westminster,' about various helplines for parents. It also runs a Parents' support group twice a term.

For more information about PAN-Westminster call 020 8960 3033 (via Carers Network) or write to PAN-Westminster, c/o VAW, 37 Chapel Street, London NW1 5DP.

Westminster Local Education Authority has an officer whose job is to support Parents of Children who have Special Educational needs. She is the Parent Partnership Officer, Coral Glennie.
Tel: 020 7641 5355



