## **Understanding SEN Support (Without an EHCP)**

*For parents and carers navigating Special Educational Needs support in England*

### **What is SEN Support?**

SEN Support is the first level of help that schools must provide to children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). It is available without needing an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and should be tailored to your child’s unique needs.

SEN Support is part of the school’s legal duty under the **Children and Families Act 2014** and the **SEND Code of Practice (2015)**.

### **Who is SEN Support For?**

SEN Support is for children who:

* Have difficulty accessing learning compared to their peers.
* Need additional help that goes beyond what is normally provided in class.
* May or may not have a diagnosis.

Your child **does not need a formal diagnosis** to receive SEN Support.

**Unsure whether your child is on SEN Support?**

A child receiving SEN Support might:

* Have a SEN Support Plan, IEP, or Learning Passport
* Receive extra help in class (e.g., adult support, visual aids, targeted interventions)
* Be working with external professionals (e.g., speech therapist, educational psychologist)
* Have regular SEN review meetings with the SENCO

If you're unsure, ask the school:

*“Is my child currently on SEN Support, and what does that include?”*

## **The Graduated Approach: Assess – Plan – Do – Review (APDR)**

**Schools must use a cyclical process known as the *Graduated Approach* to support children at SEN Support level.**

### **Assess**

### The school should assess your child’s needs using:

* Observations
* Teacher assessments
* Information from you and your child
* Input from specialists (if involved)

### **Plan**

The school, usually led by the SENCO, should:

* Agree what outcomes they want your child to achieve
* Set out the support (interventions, strategies, adaptations)
* Record this in a support plan, shared with you
* Include your child’s views

### **Do**

Teachers implement the support, adapting teaching and ensuring strategies are used daily.  
 Teachers are responsible for your child’s progress, even if another adult is helping them.

### **Review**

Support should be reviewed **at least once a term**, involving:

* You and your child
* Discussion of what’s working and what’s not
* Updates to the plan

**Tip**: Ask to see the written support plan and request regular review meetings if they’re not already happening. You can also request to keep a copy of the plan at each review, to keep for your own records.

### **What Should SEN Support Include?**

Support can look different for every child. Some common types include:

#### **In-Class Support:**

* Differentiated teaching methods
* Extra adult support during tasks
* Chunked instructions and simplified language
* Movement breaks, sensory tools

#### **Targeted Interventions:**

* 1:1 or small group work in literacy, numeracy, or social skills
* Access to a teaching assistant (TA) for specific lessons
* Short-term catch-up programmes
* Social skills or emotional regulation groups

#### **Specialist Tools & Resources:**

* Visual timetables, task planners, coloured overlays
* Sensory aids like wobble cushions or ear defenders
* Laptops, writing slopes, or alternative recording methods
* Time-out cards or safe spaces

#### **Involvement of Professionals:**

* Advice or input from the school SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator)
* Referrals to Speech & Language Therapists (SALT), Occupational Therapists (OT), Educational Psychologists (EP), or CAMHS

#### **Curriculum Adjustments:**

* Modified curriculum tailored to your child’s ability level
* Shortened tasks or extended time for work/tests
* Focus on emotional regulation and social interaction skills

It should be personalised to your child’s needs — not a one-size-fits-all approach.

### **What Should the School Provide You With?**

* A clear record of your child’s needs and the support in place (e.g. an Individual Support Plan or SEN Support Plan)
* Updates on progress and next steps
* Opportunities to meet with the SENCo and discuss concerns
* Information about referrals or assessments being considered

You have the **right to be fully involved** in decisions about your child’s support.

## **Your rights as a parent**

You have the right to:

* Be involved in decisions about your child’s support
* Be informed if your child is being placed on SEN Support
* See the provision in place and be part of review meetings
* Request professional input if your child’s needs are not improving
* Request an EHC Needs Assessment if SEN Support is not enough

If you're concerned that:

* Your child isn’t getting the agreed support
* They’re not making progress
* The school isn’t listening to your concerns

You can:

* Request a meeting with the SENCO
* Ask for evidence of the Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle
* Keep records of emails, meetings, and interventions
* Ask for involvement from professionals (e.g., EP, SALT)
* Consider requesting an EHCP Needs Assessment

### **When is SEN Support Not Enough?**

If your child:

* Is not making expected progress despite support
* Needs significant additional provision or specialist placement
* Requires input from multiple services

…it may be time to consider **requesting an EHC Needs Assessment**. This is the first step toward an EHCP.

### **📞 Need Help or Advice?**

You’re not alone. As an independent SEND Advocacy, we offer **free, confidential support** to help you understand your child’s rights and options.

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