

Supporting children with special educational needs (SEN)

If a child has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them, they are termed as having 'special educational needs' (SEN).

Local authorities (LAs) are responsible for identifying and meeting a child's special educational needs. The stages in identifying and meeting different levels of special need are set out in the [Special Educational Needs Code of Practice](#) (opens a new window). Schools and LEAs must follow the guidance given in the code.

Parent partnership services

Parent partnership services provide support and advice about SEN, providing information on the options available to you.

The SEN code of practice stresses partnership between parents and professionals and LAs must provide information and advice to parents regarding special educational needs, through parent partnership services.

One role of parent partnership services is to provide Independent Parental Supporters for parents who want them. Independent Parental Supporters are people who support parents in dealing with the special education system. More information, including how to contact your local parent partnership service, is [available on the DirectGov website](#) (opens a new window).

Statutory assessment and statementing

If a child's special needs cannot be met by a mainstream school with support, there is a formal process of statutory assessment. For most deafblind children, this will happen before school entry. For more information or to apply for an assessment of the special educational needs of your child, please visit [the DirectGov website](#) (opens a new window).

Following assessment, the LA may issue a statement of special educational needs. This is a legal document which details the child's needs, the provision required to meet those needs and the school or other setting responsible for the child. Parents can contribute to the statement by:

- providing information
- naming other professionals who should be consulted
- discussing a draft of the statement with the LA
- commenting on the draft.

Information on [initial identification and assessment of deafblindness](#) is also available on this website.

More information on statementing is available on [Direct Gov website](#) (opens a new window).

Choice of school

There is a range of [types of provision](#). Parents have a right to choose a particular school for their child, which may be either a mainstream or a special school. Children's own views should also be taken into account.

If parents choose a maintained (state) school, then the school must accept their child if certain conditions are met. Children can only attend non-maintained (independent) schools or those run by other LAs if their own LA agrees to fund them, or their parents pay the costs. Parents can educate children at home if they wish, provided the LA agrees that the child's special educational needs are being met.

More information, including some questions to think about when choosing a school or other educational setting is available on [our 'choosing a school' page](#) and also on [the DirectGov website](#) (opens a new window).

Inclusion

Increasing numbers of children with special educational needs are educated in mainstream schools with support. This policy ('inclusion') aims to combat discrimination against people with disabilities and to include them fully in society.

Inclusion for deafblind children may also mean education with children with other disabilities (for example, single sensory impairments).

For deafblind children, successful inclusion depends upon the child's needs, abilities, interests and personality, the resources provided (particularly staffing levels and training of staff) and the attitudes of staff and other pupils.

Targets and reviews

Wherever they are educated, children with special educational needs will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which sets out the short-term targets for the child, the teaching strategies and the process for reviewing the IEP.

The child's statement must be reviewed at least annually - possibly more often if, for example, the child's needs are changing rapidly. Parents and involved professionals must be involved in the review. After each review, the LA decides whether to change the statement in any way. From Year 9 (age 14) onwards, the annual review must develop the child's transition plan which covers their move from school to post-school provision.

More information on statementing, including [reviewing a statement](#) (opens a new window) and [changing a statement](#) (opens a new window) is available on Direct Gov's website.

Disagreements between parents and LEAs

If parents disagree with LA decisions, they can use a disagreement resolution service and/or appeal formally against decisions to the SEN Tribunal. They can appeal if the LA on various grounds, including:

- refuses to assess their child
- refuses to issue a statement
- decides to stop maintaining the statement

Further information about SEN tribunals are available on the [SEN tribunal's](#) website (opens a new window).

Further information and advice

- Sense has produced several [factsheets about education](#)
- The Department for Education and Science (DfES) publish a useful booklet called [Special Educational Needs \(SEN\): A Guide for Parents and Carers](#) (opens a new window).
- [Information about appropriate qualifications](#) for people assessing children
- [Advisory Centre for Education \(ACE\)](#) (opens a new window)
- [Independent Panel for Special Education Advice \(IPSEA\)](#) (opens a new window)
- The [Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education](#) (opens a new window)

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