Early Years Special Educational Needs Disability Policy Guidance

All early years settings in the maintained, voluntary or private sectors that receive
government funding for early education should have a written Special Educational Needs
Disability (SEND) policy. This policy should contain the information set out in the
conditions of grant. This is a statutory duty in line with the Special Educational Needs

The SEND policy should show how the setting works towards meeting the needs of
children with SEND and how their learning and development is supported. The SEND
policy should reflect the skills, experience and training of staff. It should also demonstrate
the nature of intervention through the use of short term plans for children with SEND. The
SEND policy should be freely available to all parents.

The Head of Centre or Manager and the Special Educational Needs Coordinator
(SENCO) should take overall responsibility for the SEND policy but all staff should be
involved in its development. There should be procedures in place to ensure regular
monitoring, evaluation and review of the policy annually with the flexibility to update and
amend as necessary.

Legislation

- Equality Act 2010
- Special Educational Needs and Disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2014)
- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014)

A definition of SEND

Provide readers with a definition of SEND for example:

“A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls
for special educational provision to be made for him or her” (SEND Code of Practice 2014
paragraph xiii pg:15).

At (Setting name) we recognise the DFE definition of special Educational Needs...

The SEN policy must be reviewed and evaluated annually. This provides an opportunity to
check whether the policy is working well or whether it needs be revised or changed in any
way.

- Once a year the setting must review and evaluate the effectiveness of:
- Systems for identifying and assessing children with special educational needs.
- The provision made to meet children’s special educational needs
- The record-keeping for special educational needs
- The allocation of resources for children with special educational needs

The best approach to evaluation is to ensure that SEND policy and practice are part of an ongoing evaluation of the provision. Information should be available to judge the success of any identification and assessment that the provision made for children, and how beneficial this has been to children’s progress. In addition, it is useful to identify a key area, which the setting is interested in developing. For example, if a key development is to improve partnership with parents, then it would be useful to include a focus on this area through the SEND Policy Review. Alternatively, if a setting puts a lot of time and energy into staff development during the year, it would be sensible to looked at how successful this investment has been in making a difference to what happens to children.

The SEND policy for SEN must be reviewed annually and should always include both the date of the review and the date when the next review will take place.

An Introduction

Your policy introduction could state as follows

• At (setting name) we welcome children with special educational needs as part of our community and we aim to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to access and engage in the Early Years Curriculum.

• We work on belief that all children and their families have the right to be part of their local community and to be welcomed and included.

An Aim

Your policy aims could state the following (These can be adapted to reflect your own setting):

• We recognise that we will need to consider the individual needs of children when planning our curriculum. We aim to provide a curriculum, which is accessible to the individual needs of all our children.

• We recognise that some children will need additional support to access the whole curriculum. We will ensure that the developmental needs of children are identified early and where needed the appropriate support is sought. We aim to provide appropriate support and strategies to achieve this.

• We recognise the importance of early identification and assessment of children with special educational needs. This is particularly important in the area of early years care and education.

• We have a statutory duty to complete a progress check for two year olds. This is always shared with parents and a written summary is competed. The progress check will be carried out by a person/key person that knows your child well. If
there are any areas where progress is less than expected in partnership with parents we would agree further action.

• We believe in the involvement of the child and the importance of taking their views into account. We will make every effort to involve the child in a manner appropriate to their stage of development, understanding and communication style e.g. makaton/symbols/pictures, when making choices, participating and interests.

• We are committed to effective collaboration using a multi-disciplinary approach to meet the needs of children with SEND. We will actively support the children and families and maintain close links with all agencies working with the child.

• We will make reasonable adjustments to our provision and practice to meet the needs of individual children with SEND in line with the SEND code of practice and the Equality Act (2010). For example; providing a standing frame for a child with cerebral palsy, or a raised board for a child with a vision impairment.

• We will make sure our planning and our environment is differentiated to meet the individual needs of children which enables them to participate fully within the early years foundation stage

• We aim to consider and will always seek the child’s voice. We will do this by using differentiated methods such as observation, child interests, level of attention and engagement and one page profiles for example.

The united convention on the rights of the child state;

• ‘Children who are capable of forming views have a right to receive and make known information, to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter affecting them. The views of the child should be given due weight according to the age, maturity and capability of the child’

• Children who are capable of forming views have a right to receive and make known information, to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter affecting them. The views of the child should be given due weight according to the age, maturity and capability of the child.

• The child’s views will be sought whenever possible, by asking, listening, observing, and in a variety of ways through play and through collaboration with parents, carers, key persona and TAC.

**Designate person for SEND**

The name of our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is ........................................

He/she holds a strategic role in co-ordinating the provision of education for children with SEND alongside our management team.
Staff roles and responsibilities:

Examples

All staff in the setting are responsible for meeting the needs of children with SEND. The SENCO will support staff and coordinates the SEN provision across the setting. The SENCO will share information with all staff on the identified needs of the individual children and any agreed strategies to support them.

Role of the SENCO

- Supporting colleagues in planning to meet the needs of a child with SEN.
- Advising colleagues about the range of strategies available to use.
- Identifying staff training needs and encouraging colleagues to attend relevant training.
- In our setting we give all children a six-week settling in period. (Consider a level of flexibility here to meet the needs of children accessing nursery provision on a part time basis). We identify children’s needs both through observation and by talking to their parents. We monitor the progress and development of individuals through ongoing observation using the cycle of Assess, Plan, Do and Review.
- We share any concerns about the development of individual children with all staff within the setting at staff and room meetings.
- We support staff in differentiating the curriculum for individual children.

- If we feel that the provision in our setting does not meet the needs of an individual child we will adapt it accordingly differentiating the curriculum for the individual child for example: accessing the water tray if is it too high or too low.

- The SENCO is responsible for organising a number of meetings such as the Settling in review (SIR) Team around the Child (TAC) Short Term Plan (STP) SEN Support Plan (SSP) Education and Health Care Plan (EHC) and Transition Plan (TP) with parents, keyworker and other outside agencies/professionals where appropriate. He/she will also organise meetings to review the STP every six to eight weeks.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2014 pg:78-90).
- The SENCO will set up a confidential file for each child and ensure all records; assessment reports are filed and kept securely in line with Data Protection (2014).

- We work closely with partner agencies including those in education and health and social care. We work in partnership with parents/carers to make referrals where necessary. This may include contributing and initiating Common Assessment Framework (CAF).
Admission arrangements:

Generally speaking, it is not expected that there will be any different admission arrangements for children with special educational needs. SEND policies often include an explicit statement to this effect, stating that the setting will make every effort to meet the individual needs of a child with SEND. Some settings have an admissions policy which gives precedence to children with SEN. This is for the setting to decide, but whatever the decision it must be stated clearly in the policy.

Admission forms should include a space to capture Information about:

- GP
- Health Visitor.
- Any SEND needs emerging or otherwise
- Parental concern.
- CAF
- Previous setting
- TAC involved
- Vision and hearing test
- Etc............

It is important to ensure that your admission policy is in line with your SEND policy.

Specialist settings and staff specialisms

Some settings may have staff that have particular skills that would enable the setting to meet particular needs. It would be useful to undertake an audit of staff skills and experience before completing this section. In this section celebrate the particular skills and expertise of your staff team such as:

- British Sign Language (BSL)
- Makaton
- Drama therapy
- Devising and using visual supports i.e. visual timetables
- Infant massage for children with SEND
- Working with Parents
- Experience of working with children with Downs, Visual Impairment,
- Autistic Spectrum disorder and hearing impairments and Cerebral palsy.

Address the following:

Consider your facilities, resources and specialist equipment that increases and supports access to the curriculum offered by the setting. It could be that the staff in the setting are trained and use a sign system to support communication. This should include details of.
disabled access and facilities. If relevant you should also include changing facilities. These must be appropriate to age for example: a degree of privacy is necessary for children who still need to be changed at an age when most children do not. This could be achieved by having a changing bed with screens.

This section should also describe any resources which increase and support access to the curriculum by children with SEND. This could include any equipment you have which is particularly suitable; detailing any training that may be required for example: manual handling, use of hoist etc. It could be that the staff in the setting are trained and use a sign system to support communication.

Funding for children with Special Educational Needs (SEND)
(Always discuss and obtain parental consent before applying for funding)

All settings will have their own systems for allocating finance and are aware of the system for applying for funding from their local authority. Consideration should be given to identifying what proportion of funding, however small, might be identified to meet children’s special educational needs. This funding might be for some extra staffing for small group or individual needs, or for resources or adaptations to improve access for children. It may be possible to address specific resource requirements through fund raising or applications for grants. If the setting receives specific funding for individual children with special educational needs, with or without an Education Health and Care Plan, (EHCP) this section of your policy should explain how this funding is used to support the needs of the individual child.

Example

The staff of (setting name) recognises our duty under the Equality Act (2010) therefore a proportion of the setting’s budget will be allocated to meeting the needs of individual children with special educational needs. This will be done regardless of whether we have a child with special educational needs on roll at that time.

For example we will use this allocated funding to:

- Employ an additional part time member of staff
- Buy soft furnishings to reduce background sound for children with a hearing impairment
- Buy blinds to control lighting conditions for children with visual impairment

You may also want to mention funding applications for example:

We are also able to apply to the Early Years funding panel for additional funding in order to support individual children e.g.to implement short term planning targets or fund specialist equipment.

This should not be a statement of principle but a statement of ‘how!’ This section might include the following points:
• The curriculum is planned to meet the individual needs of all children
• The curriculum is further modified on a short-term planning basis to meet specific
  Individual’s special educational needs
• Extra support is available to enable access
• Resources are carefully chosen to facilitate access.

Example

At (setting name) we recognise the importance of observing all children on a regular
basis, and we use these observations to inform curriculum planning. We plan for
individual children with special educational needs so that they can access the curriculum
fully, in a way that is appropriate to their stage of development and age.

Some ways we do this could include:

• Ensuring that a child with a physical disability has some adult support but not
  intrusive) support when using the climbing frame.
• One-to-one adult support for 10 minutes during a session to support turn-taking
  and sharing. We then evaluate our planning to ensure that children are able to
  fully access the broad and balanced curriculum we provide.
• At (Setting name) we plan to use additional adult support at key times during the
day when children find a transition, activity or attention difficult for example.

The evaluation process of the policy including the how, when, and by whom

This section usually begins with a very positive statement that children with special
educational needs are regarded as full members of the community. The provision is
inclusive, and children have full access to the environment, resources, staff and activities.

At (setting name) we aim to develop our inclusive practice in everything we do.

For example

• Using Makaton with all children, not only those with language difficulties.
• Using visual timetable support with all children.
• Use of Persona dolls to explore physical differences and challenge stereotypes.

Arrangements for dealing with concerns and complaints from parents of children
with special educational needs

Settings will already have a complaints procedure. This section suggests that, due to the
sensitive and emotive nature of special educational needs, there should be arrangements
in place that are over and above the scope of the general complaints procedure. It might
be useful to state that concerns and complaints about SEND provision should be
addressed to the keyworker, SENCO/nominated person or a senior manager. They will
respond by meeting with the parents or carers to discuss the situation. If this does not
resolve the issue, the complaint should then pass to the first level of the general complaints procedure.

Example

At (setting name) we recognise the sensitive and emotive nature of special educational needs. We have therefore implemented arrangements for dealing with complaints or concerns about SEN provision that are over and above the setting’s general complaints procedure.

Any concerns or complaints about SEN provision should be addressed to the keyworker, SENCO or a senior manager. They will respond by meeting with the parent or carer to discuss the situation. If this does not resolve the issue, the complaint will then pass to the first level of the general complaints procedure.

Arrangements for ongoing staff training and continuous CPD

This is an important section, and it is helpful to approach it in two parts. The first of these should focus on training for individuals in order to fulfil a specific role, e.g. the SENCO/nominated person, and training for new members of staff (this should be part of the setting’s induction programme).

The second section should address the training needs of the whole setting. It is difficult to give the fine details of what you will need at this point as this will differ in every setting. Therefore, it might be better to state that the setting is committed to providing and facilitating attendance at in-service training in the area of SEN, and that an annual training needs analysis will be undertaken. This should be done on a regular basis, perhaps as part of the annual review of the SEN policy.

Example

At (setting name) we value the importance of ongoing access to training in order to enable staff to meet the needs of individual children. We will review the staff training needs on an annual basis and plan training accordingly. We have a commitment to developing the skills and knowledge of new staff through an induction programme, which includes specific training in meeting the needs of children with special educational needs.

We also complete a SENCO action plan which includes areas of SEND CPD.

Agreed arrangements for developing parent partnership

This is about partnership with parents. The focus is on partnership, which is a two-way process. Generally this section includes references to the following:

- An ‘open door’ policy. This means parents can approach the setting whenever they have a concern and time will be made for them.
- Scheduled meetings for parents to meet and discuss their child’s progress.
• Opportunities for parents and carers to come and work, or observe their child in the setting.
• A parents/carers’ room or space.
• Social opportunities such as coffee mornings.
• Special support groups. Some settings facilitate a support group for SEN if they have large numbers of children with special educational needs. Here, parents can meet together, discuss their situation and generally gain support from each other. Alternatively, settings often hold details of local and national support groups and pass these on to parents, encouraging them to make contact.

This section should also include a strong statement that parents and carers’ views and suggestions are valued and they are listened to. Many policies recognise that parents know their children best and have a great deal to contribute.

Example

At (setting name) we recognise the value of working with parents as partners. We work with parents in many ways including:

• An open door policy, with daily opportunities for parents to share information and discuss issues with staff and management
• Keyworker system
• Keeping parents involved and informed at every stage of their child’s learning and development, and inviting them to all review meetings
• We value the contributions of parents on all levels, including their contributions towards short term plans, one page profiles, and transitions plans at all times valuing their expert knowledge of their child.

Protocols for establishing links with other settings, including specials schools

Any established links should be noted. Local special schools, especially those with early year’s provision, can be excellent sources of specialist support and advice for early year’s settings.

Example

We at (setting name) endeavour to link with Children Centres services such as parent support groups, speech and language therapy and community child psychology. We also link with special schools in the borough for advice and support for children with specific needs.

If your local authority has agreed procedures for the transfer of information from early years settings to school these should be included in this section.

You will have collect a great deal of valuable information about children’s special educational needs, which schools will need in order that they can carry on the good work that you have begun. Too often children have their special educational needs rediscovered when they transfer to school.
You may already have procedures for passing on information to schools. In which case the SEND records or profiles can be included in this information. It is also a good idea to make personal contact with schools receiving your children with SEND. A transition meeting can be set up with the school SENCO where setting staff can personally pass on information about a child’s needs and what strategies have been successful in supporting them. Setting staff can also make themselves available for telephone contact after the child begins school.

Another area to explore is supporting parents who are preparing for this transition. Sometimes staff accompany parents when they visit different schools. This way they can support them and ask important questions about how the school will meet the child’s special educational needs. The amount of detail here will differ according to the resources available in your provision.

Example

We have strong working relationships with our local primary schools through arranged visits and shared events, which help to build a sense of community. We feel that good transition procedures for children with special educational needs have a positive impact on the transition to school for all children. Our transition procedures include:

- An initial transition planning meeting involving all relevant professionals, parents, keyworker, and the SENCO or Headteacher from the receiving school.
- Planned visits to familiarise the child with the school environment.
- Passing on of most recent records.

Procedures for establishing links with outside agencies such as Health, Children and Social Care, Educational Psychology Service and any other voluntary organisation

You may already have links and procedures for these areas. Links with voluntary organisations often grow over the years. If you have a child with a special educational needs that you have not encountered before, such as hearing or visual impairment, it is a good idea to contact relevant Outreach Service and or voluntary organisations. They can often provide helpful guidance, or may even provide some support through a local branch of their organisation. Over the years these contacts can grow into working relationships.

Guidance taken from:

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2014) Copies can be obtained

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage,


For further information and advice contact: The Islington Area SENCO Team 020 7527 5599