Kent Parent Partnership Service

Supporting families of disabled children and children with Special Education Needs

Early Years – Extra Help

Parent Information
Early Years – Extra Help

Children learn in different ways and progress at different rates. Many children need some kind of extra help during their time in education. Early years settings aim to support these children through a ‘graduated approach’, which takes into account their individual learning needs. The Government has produced guidelines to support children with Special Educational Needs which early years settings and schools should follow. These are set out in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.

My child might have a difficulty in learning

Every parent wants the best for their child and to know that their early education experience is a happy one. If you are worried that your child may be having difficulties in their early years setting, how do you get something done about it?
What to do next

Talk to the people who work with your child. Tell them what you feel and ask them if they think the same. Ask them if your child is at the same level as most other children of the same age and whether your child is already getting extra help. Remember that difficulties with behaviour and how your child relates to others can be as important as difficulties with speaking and doing things.

Sometimes talking to someone at the early year setting will be enough to put your mind at rest. Staff in the early year setting can help children overcome difficulties by providing a programme suitable to support their learning needs.

Try to write down your queries and questions point by point. Ask a friend to help. Going through everything with someone first, can make it easier to talk to a teacher or nursery worker.

Think about what is worrying you most:

- Is your child unhappy and when did you first notice this?
- Has their behaviour at home changed and how does this compare with behaviour at the early year setting?
- Say, from your experience, what you feel might help.
- Do you think your child’s progress is adequate and, if not, say why and what the difficulties might be, as you see them?
- Are the problems getting worse?

Early years settings should find out what children think and take notice of their views. It is also very important that you find out exactly what your child feels.

If you don’t feel comfortable to arrange a meeting, it might help to put all your questions and points in a letter to the early years setting. This helps everyone to be clear about your worries and will make sure that everything you want to talk about is recorded.
Early Years Action

When an early years setting identifies your child as having a learning difficulty or special educational need, they will talk to you about appropriate additional support. If your child has had help through differentiation *(which means that work is changed to suit the needs of the child)* and has still not made good enough progress, the early years setting might be able to do more. Generally, they will then give your child special educational help through Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus. Through Early Years Action, your child can get help that is either extra to and/or different from, the help that the early years setting usually gives children through differentiation.

Early Years Action Plus

At regular intervals, the early years setting should meet with you to talk about your child’s progress and their needs. If progress is very small, they could decide that more support is needed. External specialists may be asked to come in to assess your child and, with your child’s teachers, should look at different ways of teaching and helping your child. The specialists will advise on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Sometimes they will teach or help children personally. These specialists could include Educational Psychologists, Behaviour Specialists, Speech and Language Therapists or Healthcare professionals. The help should usually take place in your child’s early year setting.

The Code of Practice stresses that Early Years Action and Action Plus are not hurdles to be crossed before a statutory assessment. If your child has more serious difficulties they may go straight to a statutory assessment.
**Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

Your child’s help might be written down in a document called an Individual Education Plan (IEP). IEPs should be looked at regularly and at least three times a year. It should be discussed with you and your child.

**IEPs should include:**
- three or four short-term key targets that match your child’s needs;
- the ways of teaching (strategies) to be used;
- the help to be put in place;
- when the plan is to be reviewed;
- your views;
- your child’s views;
- issues affecting your child’s progress;
- updated information and advice from any professionals;
- how the early years setting will decide if the help has been successful, or;
- how the early years setting will decide if the help is no longer needed.

The Plan should only record that which is **additional** to and/or **different from** the differentiated curriculum plan that is in place for all children.

Some schools use provision mapping which summarises their arrangement for children that need extra help.
Role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)

The SENCo should have responsibility for:

- ensuring communication between parents/carers and other professionals in respect of children with special educational needs;
- advising and supporting other staff in the setting;
- ensuring appropriate IEPs are in place;
- ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with special educational needs is collected, recorded and updated.

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