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INFORMATION SHEET : 1

I THINK MY CHILD HAS SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS. WHAT CAN I DO?

(This Information Sheet is for parents/carers of children of school age. For pre-school children please ask for the Pre-school Children with Special or Additional Needs Booklet)

1. How much do you know already?

You clearly have concerns about your child's progress but:

- have you spoken to your son or daughter's school about your concerns?
- do you know how the school works with children who may have special educational needs?
- do you know if your son or daughter is on the Code of Practice stages and if so which one?
- does your son or daughter have an individual education plan?

2. Who should you speak to in school?

The first person to speak to is probably your child's class teacher or form tutor. You might want to do this at a parent consultation session or to make a separate appointment to see them.

If you want to, you could ask for the meeting in writing setting out what it is you want to discuss, for example:

Dear Mrs Jones,

I would like to arrange to see you in school next week to talk about James' progress. I do not feel that James is reading as well as his sister did at the same age and would be grateful for an opportunity to discuss this with you.

I can be available during the morning/after school/at lunchtime, etc... and can be contacted on

Yours sincerely

After you have spoken to the class teacher they may involve another teacher in the school known as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator ¹(SENCO for short). The SENCO has responsibility for what happens on a day to day basis in the school for pupils with special educational needs. The SENCO also provides professional advice to other teachers in the school to help all pupils to make progress.

The Headteacher and school governors also have responsibilities in law in relation to children with special educational needs.

The pupil's school records² should be updated regularly to record information about SEN and the action that is being taken.

3. How are children's needs identified and assessed, and what action is taken by the school?

The current Special Educational Needs' Code of Practice³ was published by the Government in November 2001 and came into effect on 1 January 2002.

The Code of Practice gives guidance on the main forms of additional or different action that should be taken to meet the needs of pupils. It says that for most pupils extra help will be provided in the classroom, managed by the class or subject teacher. This could be by working with

¹ Partnership with Parents can provide an information sheet about the role of the SENCO

² Parents have a right to see their child's school records

³ Partnership with Parents can provide an information sheet about the Code of Practice 2001

the rest of the class, in small groups or on a one-to-one basis with a teacher or teaching assistant. Different actions may need to be taken for pupils at **School Action**, **School Action Plus** or those with **Statements of SEN**.

Section 317(a) of the Education Act 1996 requires schools to inform parents when they make special educational provision because they have identified their child as having SEN.

School Action: The class teacher will involve the SENCO. They will draw up an individual education plan for the pupil and will discuss the plan with you. This plan, known as an IEP⁴, is a sort of action plan and sets out

- the child's difficulties
- short term targets for them to achieve
- details of who will work with the child and what materials might be needed
- when the IEP will be reviewed

You may be given some tasks to do at home with your son or daughter as part of the IEP.

School Action Plus:

Pupils will be considered to be at School Action Plus when the school decides to call on support from outside professionals. In Surrey professionals from different specialisms work as multi-professional teams (MPTs) and are attached to groups of schools.

MPTs consist of:

- educational psychologist
- teacher for learning and language
- behaviour support teacher

The different specialists meet regularly with the SENCOs at their schools. They can provide advice to the school on how to work with individual pupils; they may provide additional specialist assessment; or they may work directly with the child. They will help to set new targets for the pupils IEP.

⁴ Partnership with Parents can provide an information sheet about IEP's

The resources needed to provide support for a pupil at School Action and School Action Plus are contained within schools' budgets - see Special Educational Needs Funding in mainstream schools leaflet.

There is no minimum or maximum amount of time that a child is expected to spend at School Action or School Action Plus. However, the pupil's progress should be reviewed regularly and targets revised to reflect progress. The pupil's school records should be kept up to date.

After some time at School Action Plus it may be felt that the Local Authority (LA) should carry out a **statutory** (legal) **assessment** of the pupil's SEN. Any such decision should be made in consultation with you. It is at this stage that the LA will become involved for the first time. Only a very small number of pupils (perhaps about 2% of the total school-aged population) will have needs which are so complex that a **Statement of SEN** is required.

The LA will consider whether the pupil meets its criteria for assessment. They will make this decision on the basis of evidence gathered from the school and others. The school should be able to provide written evidence or information about

- the action it has taken,
- IEPs,
- National Curriculum levels and attainment information,
- any educational or other assessments,
- the pupil's health,
- the views of the parent and the child,
- the involvement of other professionals
- any involvement by Social Services or the Education Welfare Service.

If the pupil does meet the criteria an assessment will be carried out. If the LA feels there is not enough evidence or that the child's needs are not severe or complex enough to meet the criteria, the assessment will be refused and you will be advised of your right of appeal against the decision.

If the assessment shows that it is necessary, the LA will issue a Statement of Special Educational Needs⁵ and make sure that the help needed by the pupil is put into place. The LA will provide additional money to the pupil's school so that they can provide the support. The LA will monitor the pupil's progress once a year through an Annual Review of the Statement⁶ which you will be invited to attend.

4. What can I do if I think my child needs a Statutory Assessment?

You have a right in law (Education Act 1996) to ask the LA to assess your child's special educational needs, whatever stage of the Code of Practice they happen to be on. It is advisable to discuss this with your son or daughter's school first, as they will be asked by the LA to provide evidence of the action they have already taken to help the child. Once the LA has received your request, it has 6 weeks to decide whether or not your son or daughter's needs are complex enough to need a statutory assessment. If they agree then the assessment will go ahead; if they disagree, they will write to you and the school explaining why.

Surrey County Council produces a useful leaflet entitled "Should my child have a Statement of special educational needs?" Ask for a copy at your local education office (see below).

Your request to the LA should be made in writing to the Area Special Needs Manager for the locality in which you live (see below for list of areas). An example of the type of letter you could write is given below:

⁵ Partnership with Parents can provide an information sheet about Statements

⁶ Partnership with Parents can provide an information sheet on Annual Reviews

(Your address and telephone no.)
(date)

Area Special Needs Manager
Area Office

Dear

Re: (Child's name and date of birth)

I am writing to ask you to assess the educational needs of my son/daughter under the terms of the Education Act 1996.

I make this request under section 329 of the Act because (give details of your reasons for making request for assessment)

I understand that you will gather information about (child's name) special educational needs and that a panel will decide whether or not those needs meet Surrey's criteria for statutory assessment.

Yours sincerely

5. Where can I find my Local Education Area Office

East Local Education Area Office	
Address: Omnibus, Lesbourne Road, Reigate, RH2 7JA Tel : 01737 737600 Area Special Needs Manager: Carol Bennett (acting)	
North East Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Spelthorne	South East Reigate & Banstead, Tandridge, Mole Valley
West Local Education Area Office	
Address: Grosvenor House, London Square, Cross Lanes Guildford, GU1 1FA Tel: 01483 517900/901 Area Special Needs Manager: Carole Gill	
North West Runnymede, Woking, Surrey Heath	South West Guildford & Waverley