

09 Early years practice procedures

09.12 Identification, assessment and support for children with SEND

Little Doves CP has regard for the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) (DfE and DoH 2015) which states that local authorities must ensure that all early years providers that they fund in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors are aware of the requirement on them to meet the needs of children with SEN and disabilities. When securing funded early education for two, three and four year olds local authorities should promote equality and inclusion for children with disabilities or SEN; this includes removing barriers that prevent access to early education and working with parents/carers to give each child support to fulfil their potential. During an outbreak of serious illness of disease (such as Covid-19), the children's SEN support plans will be reviewed and updated more frequently to ensure the children's progress and well-being.

The term SEN support defines arrangements for identifying and supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The pre-school is required to offer appropriate support and intervention and to promote equality of opportunity for the children that attend. Children's SEND generally falls within the following four broad areas of need and support:

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- social, emotional and mental health
- sensory and/or physical needs.

Little Doves Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) has the Gateway Qualification Level 3 Certificate for Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinators in Private, Voluntary and Independent settings.

The SENCO works closely with the manager and other colleagues and has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the 09.12 Identification, assessment and support for children with SEND procedure and for co-ordinating provision for children with SEND.

The provision for children with special educational needs is the responsibility of all members of the pre-school and all our staff are aware of our 09.12 Identification, assessment and support for children with SEND procedure stating the procedures for identifying, assessing and making provision for children with SEND. In-service training is provided for educators and volunteers and support is given to parents/carers.

A broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum is provided for all children and our inclusive admissions practice ensures equality of access and opportunity.

Awareness is raised of our special education provision via our website and promotional materials.

Please also see 09.12a OUR LOCAL OFFER FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES on the website [SEND | About | Little Doves Christian Pre-School \(littledovescp.org.uk\)](https://www.littledovescp.org.uk)

Graduated approach

Initial identification and support (identifying special educational needs)

- Ongoing formative assessment forms part of a continuous process for observing, assessing, planning and reviewing children's progress.
- Children identified as having difficulty with one or more area of development are given support by applying some simple strategies and resources.
- For most children application of some simple differentiation approaches will be enough to build confidence and help the child develop, 09.12b SEN Support: Initial record of concern form is used for this purpose.
- If despite applying differentiated strategies a child continues to struggle and is showing significantly more difficulty with learning than their peers or has a disability which requires specific adjustments, then the key person raises a concern with the SENCO/pre-school manager and the child's parents/carers.

Observation and assessment of children's SEN

Where a child appears to be behind expected levels, or their progress gives cause for concern, educators should consider all the information about the child's learning and development from within and beyond the pre-school.

- Information about the child's progress can be collated from formal checks such as the 09.14a Progress check at age two, observations from parents/carers and observation and assessment by the pre-school staff.
- When specialist advice is sought externally, it can be used to help determine whether or not a child has a special educational need (SEN).
- The child's key person and SENCO/manager use this information to decide if the child has a special educational need.
- If the decision is that the child does have a SEN and the parents/carers are not already aware of a concern, then the information is shared with them. Once parents/carers have been informed, they are fully engaged in the process, contributing their insights to all future actions for their child. Information on local sources of support and advice e.g. Local Offer, Information, Advice and Support Service is provided to the parents/carers.

Planning intervention

- Everyone involved with the child is given an opportunity to share their views. Parents/carers are encouraged to share their thoughts on the child's difficulties and are involved in the decision as to what will happen next.
- A first intervention option may be to carry on with applying differentiated support and to review the child's progress at an agreed date. If the child's needs are more complex, then the decision maybe to

prepare 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (in Essex this is known as One Planning) with detailed evidence-based interventions being applied straight away with simultaneously external referrals made.

- If relevant, then the child is appropriately included in development of the 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning) but only at a level which reflects their stage of comprehension.
- 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning) described below, ensures that children that are identified or suspected of having a SEN will receive the right level of support and encouragement with their learning and development as early as possible.

Involving the child

- The SEND Code of Practice supports the rights of children to be involved in decisions about their education.
- Inclusion of children with SEND helps build self-confidence and trust in others.
- Ascertaining children's views may not be easy, a range of strategies will be needed but staff take into account their views and wishes in decisions being made about them, relevant to their level of understanding.
- Accurate assessment helps identify children's strengths and possible barriers to learning.
- The key person and pre-school manager/SENCO work in partnership with parents/carers and other agencies to involve the child wherever appropriate.
- Children are involved at appropriate stages of the assessment and to their level of ability.
- Establishing effective communication is essential for the child's involvement.

09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning)

- 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning) shows what support is required to help achieve outcomes for the child and detail the frequency of these interventions and who will apply them and with what resources.
- A review date (at least termly) is agreed with the parents/carers so that the child's progress can be reviewed against expected outcomes and next steps agreed.
- A copy of the 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning) is stored in the child's file so that any other member of staff or an inspector looking at the file will see how the child is progressing and what interventions have been or are being applied.
- If a child requires specific medical interventions during their time in the pre-school, 04.09 Medical record/Health care plan is also completed and integrated into the general plans to ensure the child's medical needs are known and safely met.
- The 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning) also provides an accessible summary of the child's needs, which can be used if further assessment is required including a statutory Education

Health and Care (EHC) Assessment, development of an EHC plan and/or Common Assessment Framework/Early Help Assessment.

Drawing up a 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning)

- If external agencies are already involved at this stage, then they should also be invited to help decide on what appropriate interventions are needed to help meet outcomes for the child. The SENCO/pre-school manager takes the lead in coordinating further actions including preparation of the 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning) and pre-school short-term targets.
- Where there are significant emerging concerns (or an identified special educational need or disability) targeted 09.12c SEN support: Action plans (One Planning) are formulated that relate to a clear set of expected outcomes and stretching targets.
- 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning) highlights areas in which a child is progressing well; areas in which some additional support might be needed and any areas where there is a concern that a child may have a developmental delay (which may indicate a special educational need or disability). It describes the activities and strategies the provider intends to adopt to address any issues or concerns.
- Planned intervention is based on the best possible evidence and have the required impact on progress with longer-term goals covering all aspects of learning and development and shorter-term targets meeting goals.
- The 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning) focusses on the needs of the child, the true characteristics, preferences and aspirations of the child and involvement of the parents/carers with a clear set of targets and expected outcomes for the child. Effective planning at this stage should help parents/carers and children express their needs, wishes, and goals:
 - focus on the child as an individual and not their SEN label
 - be easy for children to understand and use clear ordinary language and images, rather than professional jargon
 - highlight the child strengths and capacities
 - enable the child, and those who know them best, to say what they have done, what they are interested in and what outcomes they are seeking in the future
 - tailor support to the needs of the individual
 - organise assessments to minimise demands on families
 - bring together relevant professionals to discuss and agree together the overall approach
- If the child fails to make progress and multi-agency support is sought, then it is at this point that Early Help/CAF assessment should be considered.

Record keeping

If a child has or is suspected of having a SEN, a dated record is kept of:

- the initial cause for concern and the source of this information, (the 09.14a Progress check at age two and/or outcomes of previous interventions). 09.12b SEN support: Initial record of concern form can also be used for this purpose drawing information from other sources
- the initial discussion with parents/carers raising the possibility of the child's SEN
- the views of the parents/carers and other relevant persons including, wherever possible, the child's views
- the procedures followed with regard to the Code of Practice to meet the child's SEND e.g. 09.12c SEN support: Action plan, referrals to external agencies and for statutory assessment
- evidence of the child's progress and any identified barriers to learning
- advice from other relevant professionals; and all subsequent meetings with parents/carers and other persons and any subsequent referrals

Records may include:

- observation and monitoring sheets
- expressions of concern
- risk assessments
- access audits (01.01j)
- 04.09 Medical record/health care plans (including guidelines for administering medication)
- 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Plan)
- meetings with parents/carers and other agencies
- additional information from and to outside agencies
- agreements with parents/carers
- guidelines for the use of children's individual equipment; Early help CAF referrals
- referral to the local authority identifying a child's special educational needs and request for statutory Education, Health, Care (EHC) needs assessment; and a copy of an EHC plan

Seeking additional funding/enhanced/top up

If the child's needs cannot be met from within the pre-school's core funding, then it will be at this point that the evidence collated will be used to apply for top up/enhanced funding from the local authority's inclusion fund. If a new or existing child is disabled and is old enough to receive the funded early years entitlement funding, the pre-school checks if the family is in receipt or have applied for Disability Living Allowance. If so, the pre-school will be able to apply to their local authority for the local Disability Access Fund.

Statutory education, health and care (EHC) assessment and plan

Statutory assessment

- If a child has not made progress, then the next steps may be for the child to undergo an Education, Health and Care Assessment.
- If a child is under compulsory school age, the local authority will conduct an EHC needs assessment if they consider that the child's needs cannot be met within the resources normally available to the early years pre-school.
- Children under age two are eligible where an assessment has indicated that the child is likely to have SEN which requires an EHC plan when they reach compulsory school age.
- When a child's needs appear to be sufficiently complex or the evidence suggest specialist intervention then the local authority is likely to conclude that an EHC plan is necessary.
- The local authority should fully involve the parent and must seek advice from the pre-school in making decisions about undertaking an EHC assessment and preparing an EHC plan.
- Little Doves CP prepares by collating information about the child's SEND including:
 - documentation on the child's progress in the pre-school
 - interventions and support provided to date
 - evidence of external agency assessment, support and recommendations
 - parental views and wishes (and where appropriate those of the child)

The information will then be submitted to the local authority to allow them to accurately assess the child in the context of the support already given.

- The local authority must inform the child's parents/carers of their decision within six weeks of receiving a request for an assessment and give its reasons for their decision. If the local authority decides to conduct an assessment, it must ensure the child's parents/carers are fully included right from the beginning and are invited to contribute their views. If the local authority subsequently decides not to conduct an assessment it must then inform the parents/carers of their right to appeal that decision, of the requirement for them to consider mediation should they wish to appeal.
- If the local authority decides that a statutory EHC plan is not necessary, it must notify the parents/carers and inform the provider, giving the reasons for the decision. This notification must take place within 16 weeks of the initial request or of the child having otherwise been brought to the local authority's attention.
- If the decision following an assessment is to compile an EHC plan the local authority should consult collaboratively with the parents/carers in the preparation of the plan ensuring that their views and their child's preferences are taken into account and that plans describe positively what the child can do and has achieved to date.

- Plans are evidenced based and focus on short term outcomes and long-term aspirations for the child including family and community support. Parents/carers have the right to request a particular provision for their child to be named within their EHC plan.
- The local authority must fund the early years pre-school if it is named. They cannot force a pre-school to take a child and can only name the provision in the EHC if the pre-school agrees.
- Local authorities should consider reviewing an EHC plan for a child under age five at least every three to six months. Such reviews would complement the duty to carry out a review at least annually but may be streamlined and not necessarily require the attendance of the full range of professionals, depending on the needs of the child. The child's parents/carers must be fully consulted on any proposed changes to the EHC plan and made aware of their right to appeal to the Tribunal.

External intervention and support

Where external agency intervention has been identified to help support a child with SEND then this intervention should be recommended in writing by a suitably reliable source such as a speech and language therapist, paediatrician or educational psychologist.

The effectiveness of the special educational needs provision is ensured by collecting information from a range of sources e.g. 09.12c SEN support: Action plan (One Planning) reviews, staff and management meetings, parental and external agency's views, inspections and complaints. A 10.02 Complaints procedure for parents/carers and service users is available to read on the Little Doves website tab 'About – Policies – 10 Working in Partnership'.

Further guidance

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) (DfE and DoH 2015)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Ready, Steady, SENCO (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2018)