

**Safeguarding and welfare requirements - Equal opportunities.**

Providers must have, and implement a policy and procedure, to promote, equality of opportunity for children in their care including support for children with educational needs or disabilities.

St Nicolas Playgroup**Childcare Practice Procedures****Identification, Assessment, and Support for Children with SEND****1.0 Policy statement**

We have 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, whether they run in the maintained, private, voluntary, and independent sectors are aware of the requirement on them to meet the needs of the children with SEN and disabilities. When securing funded early education for two, three and four years 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 to give each child support to fulfil their potential.

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

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- social and emotional
- sensory and/or physical needs

2.0 Graduated approach**Initial identification and support (identifying special educational needs)**

- Ongoing formative assessments form part of a continuous process for observing, assessing planning, and reviewing (APDR) children's progress.
- Children identified as having difficulty with one or more areas of development should be given support by applying some simple strategies and resources.
- For most children, application of some simple differentiated approaches will be enough to build confidence and help the child develop. A 'SEN Support: Initial record of concern' form can be used for this purpose.
- If despite applying differentiated strategies a child continues to struggle and is showing significantly more difficulty with learning, or has a disability that requires specific



adjustments, then the key person should raise a concern with the setting's SENCo/setting manager.

3.0 Observation and assessment of children's SEN

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

- Information can be collated from formal checks such as the progress check at age two, observations from parents, and observations and assessments by the setting of the child's progress APDR.
- When specialist advice has been sought externally, the child's key person and SENCo /manager can use this information to determine whether or not a child may have a special education need (SEN).
- If the decision is that the child does have special educational needs and the parents are not already aware of a concern, then the information is shared with them sensitively, and by the appropriately trained staff member. Once parents have been informed, they should be fully engaged in the process, contributing their insights to all future actions for their child.

4.0 Planning intervention

- Everyone involved with the child should be given an opportunity to share their views. Parents should be encouraged to share their thoughts on the child's difficulties and be involved in the decisions on what will happen next.
- A first intervention option may be to carry on with applying differentiated strategies and to support and review the child's progress at an agreed date. If the child's needs are more complex, then the decision may be to go ahead and prepare an SEN Support: Action Plan with detailed evidence-based interventions being applied straight away and simultaneously external referrals made.
- If relevant, the child should be appropriately included in the development of the action plan but only at a level that reflects their stage of comprehension.
- SEN Support Plan, this ensures that children identified or suspected of having SEN will receive the right amount of support and encouragement with their learning and development as early as possible.

5.0 Involving the child

- The SEND Code of Practice supports the rights of children to be involved in the 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, but a range of strategies will be needed.
- Accurate assessment helps identify children's strengths and possible barriers to learning.
- The key person and setting manager/SENCo work in partnership with parents 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.

6.0 SEN Support Plan

- The SEN Support Plan, should show what support is required to help achieve outcomes for the child and detail the frequency of these interventions, who will apply them, and with what resources.
- A review date (at least termly) should be agreed upon with the parents so that the child's progress can be reviewed against expected outcomes and the next steps agreed.
- A copy of the plan 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 setting, the 'Health Care Plan' form should also be completed and integrated into the general plans to ensure the child's medical needs are known and safely met.
- The action plan should provide an accessible summary of the child's needs, which can be used if further assessment is required, including a statutory Educational Health and Care Needs Plan Assessment, or an (EHCNA).

7.0 Drawing up a SEN action plan

- 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/setting manager should take the lead in coordinating further actions including preparations of the action plan and setting short-term targets.
- Where there are significant emerging concerns (or an identified special educational need or disability) target actions plans are formulated that relate to a clear set of expected outcomes and stretching targets.
- SEN Support Plan, 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 should be 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 to help meet those goals.
- The plan should focus on the needs of the child, the true characteristics, preferences, and aspirations of the child, and the involvement of parents with a clear set of targets and



expected outcomes for the child. Effective planning at this stage should help parents and children express their needs, wishes, and goals;

- focus on the child as an individual and not their SEN label.
- it should be easy for children to understand and use clear ordinary language and images, rather than professional jargon.
- highlight the child's strengths and capabilities.
 - enable the child, and those who know them the 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.
 - organize assessments to minimize demands on families.
 - bring together relevant professionals to discuss and agree together with 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 assessment should be considered.

8.0 Record keeping

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

- The initial cause for concern and the source of this information, (the progress check at age two and/or outcomes of previous interventions). SEN support: an initial record of concern form can also be used for this purpose drawing information from other sources.
- the initial discussions with parents raised the possibility of the child's SEN.
- the views of the parents 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., SEN 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 and persons and any referrals.

8.1 Records may include

- Observations and monitoring sheets
- Expressions of concern
- Risk assessments
- Access audits
- Health care plans (including guidelines for administering medicine)
- SEN support plans
- Meetings with parents and other agencies
- Additional information from and to outside agencies
- Agreements with parents
- Guidelines for the use of children's individual equipment Early help referrals.



- Referral to local authority identifying a child's special educational needs and request for statutory Educational, Health Care Needs Plan Assessment; and a copy EHCNA plan.

9.0 Seeking additional funding/enhanced/top up

If the child's needs cannot be met from within the settings 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, then the setting should check if the family is in receipt or have applied for Disability Living Allowance. If so, the setting will be able to apply to their local authority for the Local Disability Access Fund.

10.0 Statutory education, health care and needs assessment plan (EHCNA)

Statutory assessment

- If a child has not made progress, then the next steps may be for the child to undergo an Educational, Health Care and Needs Assessment.
- If a child is under compulsory school age, the local authority will conduct an EHCNA plan if they consider that the child needs cannot be met within the resources normally available to the early years setting.
- Children aged under two are eligible where an assessment has indicated that the child is likely to need SEN which requires an EHCNA 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 EHCNA plan is necessary.
- The local authority should fully involve the parent and must seek advice from the setting making decisions about undertaking an EHCNA assessment and preparing an EHCNA plan.
- Settings should prepare by collating information about the child's SEND including:
 - Documentation on the child's progress in the setting
 - 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 of their decision within six weeks of receiving a request for an assessment and give its reasons for their decisions. If the local authority decides to conduct an assessment, it must ensure the child's parents 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 of their right to appeal that decision, and the requirement for them to consider mediation should they wish to appeal.
- If the local authority decides that a statutory EHCNA plan is not necessary, it must notify the parents 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 complete an EHCNA plan the local authority should collaborate with the parents in the preparations of the plan ensuring that their views and their child's preferences are taken into account and that the plans describe positively what the child can do and has achieved to date.
- Plans are evidence based and focus on short-term outcomes and long-term aspirations for the child including family and community support. Parents have the right to request a particular provision for their child to be named within their EHCNA plan.
- If an early years setting is named, the local authority must fund this provision, they cannot force a setting to take a child and can only name the provision in the EHCNA if the setting agrees.
- Local authorities should consider reviewing an EHCNA 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 must be fully consulted on any proposed changes to the EHCNA plan and made aware of their right to appeal to the tribunal.

11.0 External intervention and support

Where external agency intervention has been identified to help support 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.

12.0 Children Under the age of 2

Parents, health services, childcare settings, Sure Start Children's Centres or others may identify young children as having or possibly having SEN. For most children under two whose SEN are identified early, their needs are likely to be best met from locally available services, particularly the health service, and for disabled children, social care services provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The Local Offer should set out how agencies will work together to provide integrated support for young children with SEN, and how services will be planned and commissioned jointly to meet local needs. For very young children local authorities should consider commissioning the provision of home-based programmes such as Portage, or peripatetic services for children with hearing or vision impairment. Parents should be fully involved in making decisions about the nature of the help and support that they would like to receive – some may prefer to attend a centre or to combine home-based with centre-based support. Children and their parents may also benefit from Early Support, which provides materials and resources on co-ordinated support. Further information about the programme can be found on the GOV.UK website. Special educational provision for a child aged under two means educational provision of any kind. Children aged under two are likely to need special educational provision in accordance with an EHC plan where they have particularly complex needs affecting learning, development and health and are likely to require a high level of special educational provision which would not normally be available in mainstream settings. A decision to



issue an EHC plan may be made in order to allow access to a particular specialist service that cannot otherwise be obtained, such as home-based teaching. The factors a local authority should consider in deciding whether an EHC plan is necessary are set out in Chapter 9 of the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice, paragraphs 9.53 to 9.56.

13.0 Portage worker

At St Nicolas Playgroup we can also refer the child to a portage worker if under 2 if it is considered beneficial to the child. We will work closely with the local authority in this case.

14.0 Further guidance

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

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf

<https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/send/about-local-offer/>

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

This policy was reviewed by:	The Manager	Signed
On:	Date: 31 August 2025	V E Evans
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