

## Autism in Education

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### **1. How can I get school to support my child's needs?**

Education settings, including early years providers, schools, and colleges, all have a duty to identify and support children and young people who have, or may have, SEND. Much of this support will initially come from teachers and staff in the school itself, co-ordinated by a SENCo (Special Educational Needs' co-ordinator). This should be in partnership with you, and this will normally be done with some form of paperwork to identify needs and provision, whilst also having targets/outcomes for the child/young person.

However, there may be times that schools need additional support to help them identify needs or provision. Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has some specialist services to support educational settings such as the Educational Psychology Service and Specialist Teaching Service settings. Most of these are "traded" services, meaning that the settings pay for them to carry out their work. When discussing your child's SEND with a school, it may be useful to find out if any of these services will be involved.

If you are having difficulty in getting support for a child in a school, the best thing to do is to speak to the SENCo. If this still does not move things forward, then you should contact the Headteacher. This is also the same route if support previously agreed is not being provided.

If your child/young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) the provision in the plan must be provided. The responsibility for this lies with the Local Authority, so if something is not being provided, you would need to discuss this with our Education Health and Care co-ordinator. They are based in the Special Educational Need Assessment and Review Team (SENDAR) contactable on (01926 742160 or email [sen@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:sen@warwickshire.gov.uk))

#### **2. How do I get reasonable adjustments for my child at school?**

Under the Equality Act (2010), schools are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' so that all children can access their facilities and services. These adjustments might range from changes to the classroom environment, to school trips and uniform policies. If a child or young person has a disability, this applies not only to maintained (state) schools, but also to independent placements, including academies or those offering alternative provision, as well as to both maintained and non-maintained special schools.

The term 'reasonable' is not explicitly defined in the Act, which leaves it up to the discretion of the school or LA to determine this. Some (but not all) of the factors that may influence a decision are:

- Financial resources of the school
- Cost of the aid or service
- Effectiveness of the adjustment
- Effect on other pupils
- Health and safety requirements

Requests for adjustments to be made for a child or young person with a disability would normally be directed to the Headteacher/Principle of a school but may also start with a discussion with the class teacher or SENCo. Many schools will include information about reasonable adjustments in their SEN information report (normally found on their websites).

**3. School staff say they can't offer any support until my child receives a diagnosis. Is this true?**

Having a diagnosis may enable settings/professionals to better understand a child or young person's needs. However, a diagnosis is **not required to access support**. All educational settings have a duty to assess and identify any SEND that a young person may have. In Warwickshire, the professionals who support settings do not require a young person to have diagnosis before having an input.

It is expected that settings are using the graduated approach to SEND, often referred to as "SEN Support", which works on the "Assess, Plan, Do, Review" cycle (<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/send-inclusion-guidance>). This should be the basis of all interventions by education settings, and should not be on the basis of having a diagnosis.

**4. My child has sensory issues with certain textures of clothing e.g. school uniform. What can I do?**

There are some good tips available on the "[All about Sensory](#)" website, particularly around school uniform. Many schools will be open to a discussion about changes to a uniform policy, particularly where it is to the detriment of the child/young person's education. It can also impact on things like attendance and behaviour in school, so it is normally in the best interests of everyone to find a suitable solution.

It is sometimes easiest to have these discussions on the basis of it being a reasonable adjustment. If there are particular clothes that your child/young person really struggles with, there might be some easy ways to adjust what they wear at school which everyone is happy with.

**5. My child doesn't want to go to school. Who can support me?**

There may be a number of different reasons why a young person might not want to go to school, and this has increased since the disruption caused by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Firstly, make sure you keep good communication with the school. They might be able to offer specific support to the child to help them back into school on a consistent basis. These discussions may be with a class teacher, Year Head, SENCo or a specific staff member who monitors attendance. It is important to focus on what might be affecting the young person - do they have any identified needs? Special Educational Needs can be a broad range of needs, not just those around academic learning - it also includes social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Schools may also be able to refer young people to other specialist services to support.

If you are concerned about your child's mental health, you may also wish to speak to your GP. If they, or another mental health/medical professional, consider that a child is not fit for school, they should be able to provide evidence of this, and refer to an appropriate medical professional (probably CAMHS). The LA has a legal duty to secure suitable, full-time alternative education for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them (section 19, Education Act 1996). This applies whether or not your child has an EHC Plan.

If your child has an EHCP and is struggling to attend school, you may also wish to speak to your EHCP co-ordinator at the Local Authority to look at holding an emergency annual review.

#### **6. My child struggles to manage changes to routine, e.g. new school, teacher. What can we do to help?**

Preparation for changes is really important, particularly for those young people with social communication difficulties or ASD. This is usually far easier for those changes that we know are going to happen - for example, moving to a new school or starting a new year with a different teacher. Fortunately, there are a number of [resources and strategies](#) that can be used to minimise the impact of these changes.

One of the most important things is for this difficulty to be clearly identified as a need within their SEN Support plan (this might be called an "IEP" or "provision map") or their EHCP if they have one. This should help to identify a good transition plan, which can be put in place to prepare the young person for the change. This might be based on visuals of a new classroom, an introductory visit (or several) to a new school, or even just ensuring that there is some familiarity for the young person.

However, there will also be times when things may change at very short notice - if a teacher is ill or unavailable on a particular day, for example. Good communication with the school, normally through the SENCo, will be very important on these occasions.

#### **7. What are the alternatives to mainstream school?**

Some schools will be able to look at alternative provisions for some students. This might be either on a short-term or longer-term basis and there are generally more options for secondary-aged

pupils. Alternative provisions are normally used where a pupil cannot attend a mainstream school due to exclusion, medical difficulties or another reason. Please look at the WCC's guidance around [Alternative Provision](#)

Specialist school provision is only accessible to those pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan. This includes all [maintained special schools](#) and any [non-maintained independent schools](#). There are also some [enhanced resource provisions](#) which are attached to mainstream schools, supporting young people with ASD/social communication needs.

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/school-admissions-appeals/send-admissions-specialist-settings/3>

All parents have the option to consider "Elective Home Education". This is where a parent is saying that they are responsible for providing education for their child. If you are considering whether this is the best solution for a child, a good place to start is looking at the information provided by the Local Authority's <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/homeeducation> They are also happy to have discussions with parents/carers about this option.

#### **8. My child is being isolated and excluded at school due to behaviour. How can they be supported?**

A good starting point is to have a look at the school's behaviour policy and SEND Report - every school must publish these on their website. This should outline what the school will do if a child is having difficulty managing their behaviours in school.

Before using sanctions like exclusion, Headteachers are expected to consider a range of circumstances that might be underlying factors, for example:

- SEND, family issues or bullying) or specific triggers (for example the time of day or specific lessons) which affect behaviour.
- Are staff working with the pupil aware of any behavioural trigger points, relevant issues and the ways in which they should be managed?
- Are staff aware of mechanisms for escalation and referral routes to access external support?

Schools may have pastoral teams or external professionals that can support young people to identify any difficulties that may impact behaviour. Behaviour can be driven by a number of things, so having the pupil's voice is really important to have at the heart of any discussions.

Full details of guidance around exclusions is provided by the Department for Education in their [Exclusions Guidance](#) Warwickshire has produced a video to support parents <https://youtu.be/SpyfYFI3yYk>

**9. I need advice and support regarding applying for an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) for my child.**

There are normally two routes to applying for an EHC needs assessment (EHCNA).

The most likely starting point is where an education setting makes the request to the Local Authority - this normally will be through the SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) following discussions with parents/carers, young people and any other professionals who are supporting the young person.

If the education setting do not feel that a child/young person needs provision in line with an EHCP - normally when they feel they can meet the need using the resources in a mainstream setting - then a parent/carer or young person over 16yrs old can make a request themselves. There is no set way to do this, but it is normally better to try to provide as much information about why a child/young person might need an EHCP.

[IPSEA \(Independent Provider of Special Education Advice\)](#) have a variety of information available, including a template letter that can be used.

And of course, your friendly [SENDIAS](#) service is also there to support you through all aspects of SEND - including :-

- Empowering parents and young people (0-25) to find the confidence to express their views
- To understand their legal rights in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability
- By listening to parents, children and young people's views and concerns
- Working with parents, children and young people to explore their options
- Facilitate discussions and attend meetings with professionals and the Local Authority
- Guidance with writing letters, completing forms, preparing for assessments and to participate in reviews
- Review SEND paperwork, from initial stage to Education Health Care Plan
- Support for transitions; from Early Years to Primary, Primary to Secondary and Preparing for Adulthood.
- To work in partnership with schools, services and the local authority to develop positive relationships and outcomes.
- SEND Tribunal advice and guidance

## Download Warwickshire SENDIAS resources!

- [Advice on completing My Views](#)
- [Advice on completing the Family Conversation](#)
- [Advice on EHC Plans - Needs Assessments](#)
- [Advice on EHC Plans](#)
- [Advice on Funding for SEND](#)
- [Advice on School Meetings](#)
- [Advice when visiting a School incl Checklist](#)
- [EHCP - Timeline](#)
- [Parental Request Letter - Template to use](#)
- [School Documents and Information](#)
- [SEND Support in School - Warwickshire](#)
- [Warwickshire's Local Offer](#)
- [What is Dyslexia and useful organisations](#)
- [Barnardo's SENDIAS Service Leaflet](#)