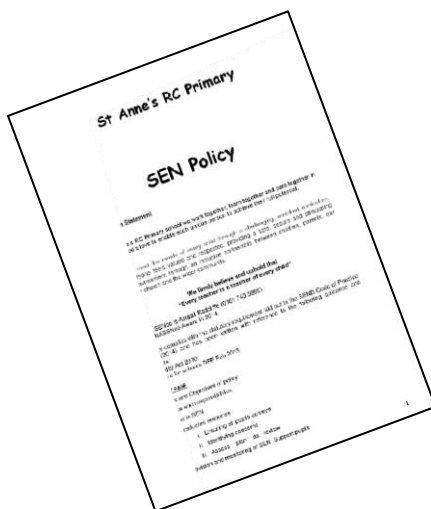




SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) SUPPORT COMMUNICATION PATHWAY

STEP ONE:

Have you read the school's SEN policy and SEN information report?



Policy: a policy sets out written guidelines for staff to follow. A SEN policy tells staff how children with special educational needs are supported.

Information report: an information report explains how the school's SEN policy is used.

Normally, these are on the school website. If not, you can ask the school for a copy of them. This will explain **what** the school does to support children with SEN and **how** the school does it.

STEP TWO:

Can you explain your child's special educational needs using professional language?

Communication and interaction need: Does your child find it difficult to explain how they are feeling and thinking? Does your child find it difficult to understand others? Does your child find it difficult to be understood by others?



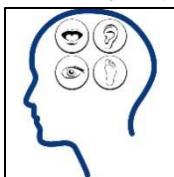
Social, Emotional and Mental Health need: Does your child find it difficult to manage their emotions and behaviour?



Cognition and Learning need: Has your child always found it difficult to understand school or home learning?



Sensory and/ or physical needs: Does your child have a physical disability or a multi-sensory impairment?



This is important, because it will help you to explain your child's needs to professionals (schools, doctors etc.) Support is also given based on needs, so it is important to be clear about your child's needs. Your child may have more than one need.

STEP THREE:

Do you understand how special educational needs are identified in school?

Identified – identification of need is how the school finds out about your child's needs.

There are many ways that the school could find out about your child's needs and try to understand your child's needs better. Your child's needs may also change over time, so schools may use different ways at different times. The SEN policy at your child's school will explain how needs are identified in that school.

Observations: a teacher or member of staff may see the need in your child, by what they say and do, while they are learning in class.



Working in partnership with parents, carers and pupils: a teacher or member of staff may talk to you about what they have seen in class, and ask for your opinion, to help them better understand your child's needs. The teacher or member of staff may also speak to the child, to help them better understand your child's needs.



Assessment tools and materials: a teacher may use an assessment or test to find out more about your child's needs.



STEP FOUR:

Have you spoken to the teacher or form tutor, to ask if your child's needs have been identified?

Some possible questions to ask your child's teacher:

- Have my child's special educational needs been identified? How were the needs identified?
- Have you asked for outside or specialist advice to know how best to support them?
- How do you ensure that you understand the individual strengths and needs of my child?
- What can I do to help my child's learning at home?

Specialist advice: the school may ask for a professional who specialises in Special Educational Needs, for help to understand your child's needs. The specialist may observe the child in class and suggest ideas for how to help your child.

Here is an example of a child's need and possible support given:

Need	Support
Child finds it difficult when there is a change in routine	Child has a visual timetable, to make it clear what is happening and when. The timetable is talked about with the child, or with the class, so that children can ask questions.

From reading the school's SEN policy and SEN information report, you may have found examples of support which would benefit your child, which you can suggest to the class teacher or form tutor.

Make a note of the date and time that you spoke to the teacher. Make a note of what was spoken about and what will happen next. Most special educational needs are supported in the classroom, through the teacher's understanding of your child's needs.

STEP FIVE:

Have you spoken to the GP or medical professional, explaining your child’s SEN using professional language?



Speak to your GP about your child’s behaviours. You may find it useful to keep a diary of any behaviours which you are worried about.

Behaviours: behaviours are examples of what your child does or says.

Here are some explanations of behaviours and needs:

Explanation of behaviours	Need
My child finds it difficult to understand sarcasm and idioms (i.e. it’s raining cats and dogs). They find it hard to explain how I’m feeling sometimes, as they find it difficult to read facial expressions.	The child may have a communication and interaction need. Through speaking to both the school and the doctor, there will be a better understanding of your child’s needs.
Over the past few months, I have noticed that my child seems to struggle with reading. I have spoken to the class teacher/ form tutor and they are helping him in school, but my child still seems to struggle. I am reading with them every night, but they do not seem to be improving.	The child may have a cognition and learning need. Through speaking to both the school and the doctor, there will be a better understanding of your child’s needs.
My child squints their eyes when looking at books and complains of headaches. They often say that things are “cloudy” which I think means “blurry”.	The child may have a physical or sensory need. Through speaking to both the school and the doctor, there will be a better understanding of your child’s needs.
My child often finds it difficult to stop worrying. They often say that they feel “sick” with worry.	The child may have a social, emotional or mental health need. Through speaking to both the school and the doctor, there will be a better understanding of your child’s needs.





STEP SIX:

Do you understand how SEN support works in schools?

After a child's needs have been identified, there is a process of assess, plan, do, review. This is sometimes called a **graduated approach**, or a **SEN support cycle**.

Process: actions or steps which should be followed, to best support your child.

Here is an example of the Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle. The SEN policy at your child's school will have more information on the school's process:

Assess 	Child's needs have been identified. Child was observed in class and behaviours were noted. Child's assessments or test scores have been looked at. Teacher has spoken with parents about child's needs and behaviours.
Plan 	Teacher writes down what will happen to support the child and when the support will be given. Support could be group work, with the teacher in class, during lesson time, on a topic that you child finds difficult. Support could be the use of objects or items to support your child.
Do 	Teacher puts things in place to support the child's needs. This happens regularly and over a period of a few weeks. Notes are made about what has been put in place over this time, to see how it is making a difference.
Review 	After the support has been in place for a few weeks, a discussion takes place to see if the support needs to be changed or continued.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS are changes that can made to help support a child's need. i.e. If a child is visually impaired, a reasonable adjustment could be that the child sits in a position where they can see the board clearly. Another reasonable adjustment for that child could be that the text used in class is printed in a larger font size, to help support the child's visual needs. For more information on Reasonable Adjustments, and lots of examples, visit this website by clicking on the link:

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/reasonable_adjustments_for_disabled_pupils_1.pdf

STEP SEVEN:

Have you spoken to the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator) at your child's school?

Some possible questions to ask the SENCO:

- How do you evaluate the impact of any interventions?

Evaluate: find out

Impact: has it made a difference?

Here is an example of an intervention. Interventions are usually short lessons, which could be in a group or individual. These short lessons are based on your child's needs. They are based on what your child needs to know, or maybe something that they have not understood. They need to be done regularly, to see if they make a difference. After a few weeks the teacher or professional will check again, to see if the regular interventions are making a difference.

Behaviour	Need	Intervention
Teacher notices that child is not remembering their times tables, despite practising every day with the class.	There may be a possible cognition and learning need.	Teacher sets up a Precision Teaching intervention. For a short time each day, the child focuses on learning a few calculations, then builds on that knowledge.

- How do you record and celebrate success? This is important as you will want to know how your child is encouraged at school and how their successes are celebrated.
- How do you work in partnership with other services to improve outcomes for children with SEN?

Partnership: working together

Other services: there are organisations that are not based in school that may offer special educational needs help or advice. For example, the Early Intervention Team at Bexley offer specialist advice to Bexley schools.

Outcomes: end results. This does not necessarily mean exam results, this could also refer to improvement in confidence, self-esteem or the development of skills.

STEP EIGHT:

What happens if my child is not making progress, despite putting strategies or interventions in place?

Strategies: The teacher or professional may have ideas which they use in order to support your child.

Here is an example of a behaviour, need and strategies.

Behaviour	Need	Strategies
The teacher notices that often the child will often appear distressed when hearing loud noises.	The child may have a sensory need. The child may have a sensory processing need.	The teacher works with the child to set up a quiet, safe space within the classroom. In that quiet space, there are headphones, cushions and calming music. This is a place for the child to go to, if they are feeling distressed. The teacher asks the child if they would like to try noise-cancelling headphones for noisy spaces like the lunch hall. The teacher finds out if there are lunch time clubs available where the child could go, if distressed by the noise in the playground. The teacher builds in quiet learning time throughout the day, to the class timetable, to ensure that the child feels safe.

If at the time of Review in the SEN support cycle, if the support is not working, the class teacher could ask the SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator) for advice. The school may ask specialists for advice. This advice can then be used to improve support. A new plan can be made and different ideas used. Time is then needed, to see if the new plan, which is put into action, improves the support given.

If at any point you would like information, advice or support contact the Bexley IASS Team for help:

Tel no: 020 3045 5976. Email: bexleyiass@bexley.gov.uk Website: www.bexleyiass.co.uk

What if I have concerns about my child's support?

Raise any concerns that you have through a conversation with the class teacher or SENCO. You may wish to follow up the conversation with an email to the SENCO, so there is a dated written record of what was discussed. The SEN Code states that where a pupil is receiving SEN support, schools should talk to parents regularly to set clear outcomes and review progress towards them, discuss the activities and support that will help achieve them, and identify the responsibilities of the parent, the pupil and the school. Schools should meet parents at least three times each year.

If there have been several discussions with the SENCO about your concerns, but your concerns have not been addressed, you may feel the need to raise a complaint. Follow the school's complaint procedure, which can be found on the school website.

To further understand SEN Support:

- Bexley Local Offer has further information about SEN Support, and local services: <https://www.bexleylocaloffer.uk/Services/category/267>

These organisations offer advice:

- IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice) offer advice on a range of topics, including challenging professional decisions. IPSEA also offer letter templates, in the Model Letters section: <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/Pages/Category/get-support>
- The NAS (National Autistic Society) provide guidance on resolving differences for students in England: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/education/resolving-differences/england>
- Contact offer guidance on resolving a range of issues: <https://contact.org.uk/advice-and-support/education-learning/school-college-complaints/>

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