
Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship for the Early Years Educator
Supporting the Needs of Babies and Young Children with
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

(SEND)



Supporting development of your career



Special educational needs and disability - the definition

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2015) defines **special educational needs** as follows

'A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age
- has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream-post 16 institutions'

For children aged two or older, special educational provision is education or training provision that is additional to, or different from that generally is made for other children of the same age. For a child under the age of two, special educational provision means education provision of any kind. A child under compulsory school age has special educational needs if he or she is likely to fall within the definition shown above when they reach compulsory school age or would do so if special educational provision were not made available for them.

Children's special educational needs are generally thought of in the following four broad areas of need and support:

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

There is often an overlap between disability and special educational needs. Therefore, a child can be defined as being disabled, having a special educational need (SEN) or having both a special educational need and a disability (SEND).

The Equality Act (2010) defines disability as

a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

This definition provides a relatively low threshold and includes many children and adults. Long term is defined by the Equality Act as a year or more and substantial is defined as more than minor to trivial.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and SEND

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the statutory framework for children's early education aged 0 to 5 years providing standards for all children's learning (including those with additional needs), development and care in early years settings.

All early year's providers must follow the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS and the learning and development requirements, unless an exemption from these has been granted.

All OFSTED-registered settings offering early years provision **must** meet these standards to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.

The role of the SEN-Co

What is a SEN-CO? It is short for Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator and leads the provision for SEN children in Early Years settings. Group provision, like nurseries and pre-schools, are **expected** to identify a SEN-Co and childminders are **encouraged** to identify a person to act as SEN-Co to help support children with SEN.

What does a SENCo do? The SENCO works closely with the manager and with all practitioners in the setting; has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the setting's SEN policy, and for coordinating provision across the setting; and for supporting colleagues in all aspects of their work with children with SEN.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 lists four main areas of responsibility for SENCos in early years settings. They are expected to:

- Ensure all practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEN.
- Advise and support colleagues.
- Ensure parents are closely involved throughout and that their insights inform action taken by the setting.
- Liaise with professionals or agencies beyond the setting.

The EYFS framework requires non-maintained (private playgroup or nursery that is not part of a school) providers to have arrangements in place for meeting children's special educational needs. They should have clear arrangements in place for identifying children's additional needs and to promote equal opportunities. This approach should form part of the provider's overall approach to monitoring the ongoing assessment of all children's progress and development.

If a child is also disabled, then the child is offered support and protection under the Equality Act 2010. Additional duties are set out within the Act for those settings in receipt of public funding.

How can settings ensure that children with SEND are supported?

Government funded early years settings should follow the guidance in the EYFS and SEND Code of Practice 2015 to ensure all requirements outlined are incorporated into all aspects of their provision. Settings should ensure that all staff are knowledgeable in relevant law and policy and know how to apply it in their practice. This ensures children's needs are identified early, appropriate support is given, and children are referred onto external agencies if their learning and development continues to be a concern.

The role of the Key Person

Settling into a new environment such as an early years setting is an emotional transition for young children especially as they learn to develop and master the complex skills needed to communicate, negotiate, and socialise with their peers. Skills such as turn taking and sharing often instigate minor conflicts between children as they struggle to deal with powerful emotions and feelings.

In early years settings a dedicated key person is responsible for individual children's needs who will know a child's level of development, their personal characteristics and specific family circumstances. This knowledge ensures children's individual needs are understood and supported and issues with behaviour are quickly picked up on. During minor disputes, a child's key person can help them reflect and regulate their actions and, in most instances, young children start to learn how to resolve minor disputes themselves. However, some incidents are influenced by other factors such as the child feeling ill or tired and changes in the family such as a new baby. Because of the key person's relationship with the child and the family these issues can be discussed and with relevant support the behaviour is usually short lived.

Sometimes a child continues to exhibit challenging behaviour despite intervention from their key person and family. In these instances, more investigation is needed to rule out more serious issues such as an underlying special educational need/disability or a safeguarding issue. These situations are usually managed by the setting's SEN-Co or manager who can apply relevant interventions to seek further help to stop the behaviour escalating and causing further harm.

Where a child appears to be behind expected levels or where a child's progress gives cause for concern, practitioners should consider all the information about the child's learning and development. All the information should be brought together and considered with the child's parents/carers. This should include information about:

- the child's learning and development, within and beyond the setting;
- practitioner observations, formal checks, any more detailed assessment, any specialist advice;
- progress in the prime areas: communication and language, physical development, social and emotional development.

Information from parents

Key principles underpinning the SEND Code of Practice 2015 are the importance of taking into account their wishes, views and feelings of parents and of promoting their participation in decision making.

Parents have a wealth of knowledge about their children not only in their home environment but in a variety of other situations. In some cases it is parents who may first voice a concern about their child's learning or development. The child's key person is likely to be parents' first port of call. Parents' concerns should be gathered together with the other information and considered as a partnership.

Discussions with parents can give practitioners insights into a child's personality, feelings or interests outside the setting. There may be changes in a child's life which parents may not have mentioned, perhaps because they did not feel that they were important or because they are very personal, for example: illness or bereavement in the family; parents separating; a change of carer or child-minder; living in temporary or unsuitable accommodation; the child's disturbed sleeping pattern; or a new baby. Any such changes may affect a child's behaviour, progress or development and need to be taken into account in planning support.

The voice of the child

A key principle underpinning the SEND Code of Practice 2015 is the importance of taking into account the wishes, views and feelings of children themselves. Children may express their

wishes, views and feelings for themselves in a range of ways and practitioners can support interactions and dialogue with children by using visual prompts and photos to get them to show you what they like doing and what they find difficult. Practitioners can also understand children's views by observing the choices they make and what they like to do and what they avoid.

Activities for Children with Special Needs

During their time at nursery, children experience structured time together that is both fun and educational. They learn how to bond with their peers, follow directions and stick to a schedule; all skills that prepare them for school.

For children with special needs, there are certain pre-school activities that work particularly well to keep them engaged, focused and actively learning.

Here are some suggestions that can support children with special needs, whilst attending nursery and at home, be able to get the most out of their learning experiences.

Sensory Tables

Sensory tables offer a wealth of benefits for children with special needs. Engaging in sensory experiences like running fingers through dried rice or pouring water can distract and calm a child who is feeling over-stimulated or anxious. It promotes self-discovery and encourages a child to explore new textures which in turn supports social and emotional development.

Offering textures like dried beans, sand or cotton balls promotes hand-eye coordination and gives the opportunity for a child to pinch, grasp and enhance fine motor skills. As children discover new textures and objects, they tend to have a verbal response. Engaging them in a sensory table is a great way to work on language development.

Outdoor Play Time

Outdoor play is stimulating for children of all abilities, specifically those who need a little extra help developing gross motor skills. When engaging children in outdoor play time, organize specific games like hopscotch, "Simon Says," tag etc. Games like these promote whole body movement and balance while teaching children to follow directions and focus their attention. Offering plenty of options for free play is important too. When given pavement chalk and outdoor equipment like balls and hula hoops, children will engage their fine and gross motor skills without even realising it.

Light Boxes

A light box is fun and mesmerizing for all children, but it specifically helps to increase the attention spans of children with special needs. Children can spend hours with a light box, exercising their fine motor skills by creating illuminated patterns and pictures with brightly colored transparent shapes. Even better, this easy homemade version works great in a home or classroom. Be sure to have plenty of brightly colored transparent items on hand like decorating rocks, plastic blocks and even colored salt.

Materials

- 1 large opaque storage tub.

- 2 sets of string lights
- Large sheets of tracing paper
- Tape

To

assemble:

- Line the inside of the tub lid with tracing paper and secure with tape. This will help create an even distribution of light.
- Drill a small hole in the corner of the tub and feed the string lights through.
- Arrange evenly on the bottom of the tub.
- Place the lid on top of the tube and plug in the lights.

Music and Circle Time

Music activates every subsystem in the brain, including areas that regulate emotion and motivation. Setting aside specific time to sit together and make music in a circle allows children to bond with each other and gives them a sense of belonging to a group.

Music time can be especially beneficial to children who are non-verbal. For them, music can be a way of expressing themselves and interacting with their peers.

During circle time, provide children with instruments, like egg shakers, bells or toy drums. Encourage them to make noise with their instruments and move their bodies to the music. Sing songs that incorporate the name of each child so that everyone feels like they have an individual role in the activity.

Additionally, incorporate music in other activities of the day. Sing songs while cleaning up and transitioning into new activities like sleep or snack times.