Devon Information Advice and Support for Special Educational Needs and Disability

Fact sheet

How SEN support is planned and given

All children with special educational needs should get support to help them manage in school and make progress. This is called **SEN Support**. This support is planned and given using the **graduated response** and written down in a **school plan**. You can find out more about both of these things in this factsheet.

Important things to know

Support for all children and young people with SEN is planned and given using something called the **graduated approach**. This is a decision-making cycle in four clear stages: assess, plan, do and review.

The assess, plan, do and review cycle helps professionals identify each child's needs, plan their support and try it out, and then review the support to see if it works. It's the way to support children and young people to make progress towards the things that matter to them.

The graduated approach helps professionals to come up with a clear plan of support for your child. This should be written down in a **school plan**. This plan should be regularly reviewed and changed when needed, as your child's needs change.

The assess, plan, do and review cycle should happen again and again over the months and years that a child is in nursery, school and college.

The graduated approach cycle should be happening for every child with SEN, whatever the setting. That means it can and should be used from pre-school and nursery through to college and further education.

What comes out of the assess, plan, do and review cycle and what goes into a school plan is different for each child. That's because they are based on an individual child's needs and everyone is different.

Your child doesn't need to have a diagnosis for the graduated approach process to start, or for it to carry on being done. Your child doesn't need to have an EHC plan for this to happen either.

You should be able to have a copy of any school plan.

It's important for you to take part in the discussions about your child's life in school and their support. These discussions usually happen during regular meetings. For most parents these happen once a term, though they can be more often.

What is the graduated approach?

SEN support is planned and given using something called the **graduated approach**. This is a decision-making cycle in four clear stages: assess, plan, do and review.

What the graduated approach means day-to-day is that professionals assess your child, plan what support they will need, give the support and then look at how well it's worked.

Over months and years, the process is done again and again and each time your child's progress and the support will be reviewed and changed if needed. As time goes on, your child's needs should become clearer and what approach works best for them will start to show. Everyone can then build on the approaches that work.

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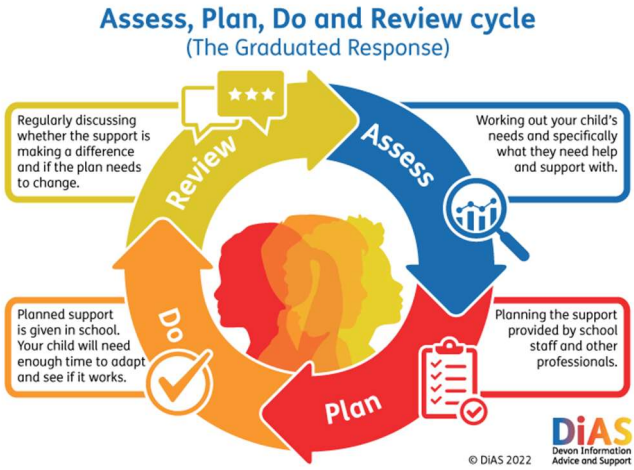
These are the four stages of the process in more detail.



Assess

This part of the cycle is about working out your child's needs – what they need help with. Your child doesn't need a diagnosis to have their needs assessed. Your child's teacher(s), support staff and the SENCO do this together, working with you and with your child if possible.

They will look at things like:

- the teacher's assessment and experience with your child
- your experiences at home and what you think your child's need are
- your child or young person's views
- the views and ideas of support staff such as your child's teaching assistant (TA)
- any assessments that have been done
- your child's progress and how that compares to other children their age
- advice and recommendations from any specialists from outside school, such as an educational psychologist – they should work together with the professionals in school

Your child's needs should be reviewed regularly. This will help to make sure that the support they get is well matched. Over time you'll also be able to see what things have been tried and how well they worked. This should help everyone to decide what the next step should be. For some types of SEN, the way a child responds to a particular type of support can be the best way of developing a more accurate picture of their needs.

When the staff at your child's school are deciding whether they need more support, or what type of support that might be, they should look at all the evidence they have. That includes the progress your child is making individually and compared to other children their age.

As well as putting specific support in place for your child, school staff should also look at anything that's stopping your child learning successfully. These barriers can then be removed wherever possible.

Plan

Once your child's needs have been assessed, the support they need can be planned. You should know what support the staff at school are going to give. That should include the support your child will get from professionals from outside of school, such as enablers or therapists.

Plans should be made in partnership with you and with your child, if that's appropriate. You should:

- agree the outcomes that are important to your child - what progress everyone is expecting and that includes changes in behaviour as well as academic or developmental progress
- agree short term targets from these outcomes – these should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely (SMART)
- decide what adjustments to school life and rules will be made to meet your child's needs
- plan what interventions and support will be put in place
- decide a date when you will meet to review what works and what doesn't work

All of the teachers and support staff who work with your child should know what the plan for their support is and what they need to do. This should be written down somewhere on the school's information system and you should be able to see and have a copy of the plans too (see more below).

Do

This part of the graduated approach cycle is the doing part, where the support is given day to day and week to week.

Your child's class or subject teacher is responsible for working with them on a daily basis to give the support. They are also responsible for any support given outside of class, such as small group work or individual support.

It's a good idea to make sure there is a fixed timescale for the support to be given before it's reviewed. For example, staff might decide to try something for half a term or a term. There needs to be enough time for your child to get used to the support and settle into it. There should also be enough time to realistically see whether it's making any difference. But, it shouldn't be so long that you end up wasting lots of time if it isn't working. Many parents and professionals review support together once a term at a meeting.

Review

This is the part of the process where you, the professionals and your child think about whether the support is making a difference. This should happen regularly. These are some of the main things to think about when you're reviewing support:

- Is the support working?
- If it's making a difference, how much difference?
- Is it happening as it should – so is the right person giving the support, have they had any training they might need, is it happening often enough?
- How is your child reacting to the support – has their behaviour changed for example?
- What does your child think about the support?

Depending on the answers to these questions, your child's class or subject teacher and the SENCO should adjust the support if needed. That might mean stopping the support and trying something different, changing things a little or a lot or leaving things as they are.

You and your child should be involved in those decisions. You can ask for information about how, success is being measured, so you can take part in the discussions.

If your child has an EHC plan, the local authority must review that plan at least once every twelve months. It's a good idea for schools to have their own plan for your child as well, so that short term plans can be made and reviewed using that.

School plans

SEN support works best when there is a clear and understandable written plan. Everyone who supports a child should be able to see and use it.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 is the legal guidance for professionals, schools and local authorities to follow. This is what it says about school plans.

"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."

Meeting to talk about your child's support helps in lots of ways.

- It helps you and your child feel more confident about the support that's being given and how and why the school staff are doing what they're doing.
- It gives you and your child a chance to have your say, and to take an equal part in the decisions that are made.
- It can make your working relationships with professionals more effective and keep communications going.
- You can get involved by supporting the approach the school is using at home where possible and relevant.
- You can report back how the support at school is affecting your child at home.

By law, schools must give parents a report once a year on their child's progress. Most schools will want to go beyond this and provide regular reports for parents on the progress their child is making.

What might be in a school plan?

Ideally, every child or young person with SEND should have a written plan of some kind. Schools and colleges use all kinds of plans, so your child's plan may look different from one for a child from a different school.

Whatever type of plan it is, it's important that it's used, kept up-to-date and reviewed regularly. It should change as your child's needs change.

The foundations of any good plan are your child's aspirations. That means the plan should start with what your child (and you) want for their future. Once you and the professionals know that, you can work out what their needs are, how they are going to achieve their goals and what support they need.

Your child's plan may explain:

- what their special educational needs are (needs)
- what support they need to help them (provision)
- the difference that support should make (outcomes)

To be most helpful, the support they are getting should be written so that it is:

- detailed and specific – you should know what type of support is being given, who will be giving it and what expertise (if any) that person may need in order to give it
- quantified – you should know when the support will be given, how long it will last and how often they will have it

In Devon there is are two support frameworks that schools use. Together, they are called ordinarily available inclusive provision (OAIP). The frameworks have details of the support that can be put in place for every child, and for children with SEND. Schools can use these to find ideas about the support that might help your child.

How often should we be meeting to talk about what's in the plan?

The SEND Code of Practice says meetings to talk about support should happen at least three times a year.

Many parents meet the SENCO and teachers once a term.

Sometimes it's useful to meet more often than that. So, if your child has just moved to a new school, if there is lots of change going on or things are especially difficult you might meet more often.

It can help to get meetings in your diary at the start of the school year, so everyone knows when things will be talked about and reviewed.

Who should be involved in meetings to review the school plan?

Meetings to review your child's plan can take place between you and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), assistant SENCO, class teacher or other staff member such as head of year. You might not always see the SENCO, especially in a bigger school, but it's important to meet with them at least once a year to look at the school plan.

Other staff may be at the meeting too, such as your child's teacher if they're in primary school, or their form tutor if they're in secondary school. If your child has a teaching assistant who gives a lot of support, it can be really helpful for them to be at the meeting too. Sometimes other professionals might be invited. In very small primary schools, the head teacher sometimes goes to these meetings.

Your child or young person can be there too if they're able to, and want to. Some children go to meetings just at the start, where they can say what they think about how things are going. Others stay for the whole meeting. You and your child will know what's likely to be best for you.

What happens at meetings?

Meetings usually follow a pattern and most of the discussion will be about your child's school plan. That means looking at and discussing each need and support, seeing what's going well and what isn't and discussing whether anything needs to change. It can also be a good time to think about your child's aspirations – what they and you want for their future.

The meeting often takes about an hour.

You'll be able to share how things are at home and you'll hear how things are going at school.

A member of staff should take notes about what is discussed and agreed during the meeting. It's a good idea for you to do the same if you can. Some parents use our meetings form which can help you keep track of what is talked about and what people agree they will do.

After the meeting the school plan should be updated. Keeping good records is important for school staff, so that there is evidence of what has been tried, what worked and what difference that made.

Ideally you should get a copy of the updated plan and the meeting notes. If that doesn't happen within a week or so, contact the SENCO and ask for them. It helps to keep your own record of meetings in a folder somewhere, so you know what happened and when.

It's really important that your child has their say. If they're not at the meeting or don't feel able to take part, there are other ways for them to share their views. They could write them down and you could share them, they could draw a picture or film themselves talking about school and their support - whatever works best for them.

What is a Relational Support Plan?

A relational approach is one that put a child's relationships with staff and their peers at the centre of their school life. It's often used to support children who have trauma or who have had difficult or challenging life experiences. It can give a child a sense of belonging in school, help them feel safe and to manage their feelings. Many schools use relational support plans to set out key relationships and the support for each child.

A relational support plan isn't the same as an SEN support plan though it should support it. An SEN support plan in school includes all of a child's needs and is focused on the whole picture - with clear goals (outcomes) for a child to work towards. A relational support plan is focused on a child's trusted adult relationships at school and how support can help them feel safe, included, connected, cared for and understood.

The plan should include details of specific things that will support the development of relationships, as well as how adults should be in their relationship with your child. If at all possible, your child should take part in developing the plan.

You can find out more about relational learning on the Devon County Council website (see below).

Need more information?

DIAS information

We have more information about:

- SEN support
- Meetings – how to get the most out of them and prepare well
- Day to day communications with professionals
- Helping your child or young person share their views

SEND Code of Practice
Legal guidance around special educational needs
www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Devon SEND Local Offer
SEND services and support available in Devon
www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-local-offer

Devon County Council
Relational Learning
www.devon.gov.uk/support-schools-settings/send/areas-of-need/social-emotional-and-mental-health/relational-learning

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