



Gateshead LEA

Policy for Special Educational Needs

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Introduction

Gateshead Council has based its policy for special educational needs (SEN) on the belief that all children, whatever their abilities, share common needs as learners and they should have access to a curriculum that responds to their individual needs. The Council recognises that most children with identified SEN can, and should be, taught in mainstream schools but also recognises that some children may have needs which are exceptional and that arrangements may need to be made to ensure they reach their potential.

The LEA will seek to ensure that its policies, procedures, advice, guidance and resources support a policy of increased inclusion. This will include enabling Gateshead's special schools to increase the range of needs they are able to meet successfully and to contribute to the development of good practice in mainstream schools and setting. Increasing Inclusion will be the key goal in the SEN Development Plan and LEA Inclusion Strategy.

Aims

Gateshead LEA aims to provide the highest quality of education for all young people and seeks to offer a continuum of provision which will enable:

- pupils' needs to be met in as inclusive a setting as possible;
- pupils to have access to the broad, balanced and relevant curriculum to which they are entitled;
- high expectations to be set for pupils with SEN;
- parents to play a vital role in supporting their child's education.

Continuum of Provision

The continuum of provision available within Gateshead LEA includes:

- support from within the delegated resources of mainstream schools;
- provision of targeted support from centrally held resources;
- placement in a support base or unit within a mainstream school
- placement in a special school maintained by the LEA.
- In exceptional circumstances, in order to meet a child's needs satisfactorily, the continuum may be extended to include:
 - placement at a special school maintained by another LEA;
 - placement at a non-maintained or independent special school.

Definitions

The LEA uses the terms “**special educational needs**”, “**special educational provision**” and “**learning difficulties**” in ways defined by the Educational Act 1996. The term “**disability**” is linked but distinct and is used as defined in the Disability Act 1995 and amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

The LEA recognises that special educational needs can arise when the experience, skills, knowledge and abilities a child bring to school or educational setting require adjustment in any or all of the following:

- The physical environment;
- The social environment;
- The curriculum and how it is delivered;
- The nature and level of additional support available to the pupil, family, school or educational setting.

An **individual need** becomes a **special educational need** when a child requires different or exceptional provision from that which is generally available. The LEA is committed to increasing the range of what is generally available to ensure individual needs do not become special educational needs.

Exceptionally able or gifted children and those for whom **English is an additional language** are excluded from this definition, unless they have an identified special educational need.

The LEA is mindful of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 which requires that pupils with special educational needs shall be educated within a mainstream setting unless:

- this is incompatible with the wishes of their parents;
- a school or the LEA cannot take reasonable steps to adapt its provision to secure a place for them in a mainstream setting without either prejudicing the efficient education of other children or incurring unreasonable public expenditure.

Key Principles

- The special educational needs of pupils should normally be met in mainstream schools or setting unless it is necessary for special educational provision to be made for them.
- All pupils should have access to a curriculum and teaching and learning strategies which maximises achievement.
- The views of children and young people should always be sought and taken into account.
- Opportunities should be taken to develop the role of parents in supporting their child’s education.
- Children’s special educational needs should be identified as early as possible.
- Provision to meet children’s special educational needs should ensure value for money and equality of opportunity.

- Effective partnerships should be established with key partners, including Social Services and Health, to develop policies and practices that re co-ordinated and best meet the needs of parents, carers and children.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of LEA

The LEA/School Relations Code of Practice 2001 sets out guidance on the relationships between LEAs, Governing Bodies and schools in seeking to ensure success for all children.

In Gateshead, the LEA will provide leadership, challenge and support in order to:

- ensure the development of an inclusive educational system;
- ensure statutory frameworks are implemented efficiently;
- develop the knowledge and skills of all staff working with pupils with SEN to ensure children achieve their potential;
- ensure there is close co-operation between relevant external agencies and a multi-agency approach to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN;
- ensure arrangements for SEN are kept under review and publish information on how the LEA is meeting its obligations under the SEN and Disability Act 2001;
- provide advice and guidance to schools to support the implementation of the SEN Code of Practice and Disability Discrimination Act Code of Practice;
- publish plans, strategies and targets in relation to the identification, monitoring assessment and support for pupils with SEN.

Role of Schools

The vast majority of pupils identified as having SEN will be educated in mainstream schools. Responsibilities towards pupils with SEN are highlighted in the 1996 Education Act, DfES's "Meeting Special Educational Needs : A Programme of Action" and the SEN and Disability Act 2001. The LEA will work in partnership with schools to ensure these responsibilities are fulfilled.

Gateshead Council recognises the important part special schools play in the development of an inclusive education system and strives to support the development of strong partnerships between special schools, mainstream schools and other resourced provisions. The LEA will work closely with special schools to ensure specialist provisions can be offered to mainstream schools.

Governing Bodies of mainstream and special schools will need to:

- ensure that responsibility for meeting the needs of all children, including those with SEN, is shared by all in the school;
- ensure they are clear about their arrangements for co-ordinating special educational provision for those with and without statements within school;
- determine the school's SEN policy, establish appropriate staffing and funding arrangements to meet the needs of pupils with SEN;

- promote high standards for pupils with SEN in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;
- have regard to the SEN Code of Practice;
- ensure the curriculum addresses the needs of pupils with SEN;
- demonstrate that the funding, equipment and resources allocated for SEN are deployed effectively.

Role of Early Years Settings

- to develop, review and report on their SEN policy;
- to accept responsibility that the responsibility for meeting the needs of all children, including those with SEN, is shared by all in the setting;
- to ensure that effective arrangements are in place for the early identification and assessment of individual needs.

Role of Support Services

- to enable schools to meet a wide range of special educational needs by providing advice, training and support, and, where appropriate targeted provision;
- to enable the LEA to meet its statutory responsibilities towards children and young people with SEN, in conjunction with schools;
- to work closely with schools, parents, carers and other support services to ensure that high quality provision and resources are allocated equitably and efficiently;
- to contribute to the LEAs Continual Professional Development Programme;
- to support the LEAs procedures for monitoring processes for referrals, provision and pupil progress.

Arrangements for Identification and Assessment

The LEA will seek to fulfil its duty to keep its procedures for assessing and meeting special educational needs under review and will ensure:

- a child's needs are identified as early as possible and interventions are reviewed regularly;
- assessment and intervention is based on partnership with those who have special educational needs, together with their parents and carers;
- assessment and provision empowers young people, taking their views into account in order that they can make a contribution to decision-making;
- assessment and intervention involving multiple agencies should be co-ordinated rather than separately planned and delivered.

Decisions about placement will be made in a number of ways but always with the oversight of the SEN Panel. Decisions about the strategic development of SEN in Gateshead will be made in the SEN Strategy Group which meets on a termly basis to review all aspects of SEN provision.

SEN Policies in Early Years Settings and Schools

The LEA will seek to support all early years settings and schools with the implementation of an SEN policy which takes account of statutory requirements in the interests of ensuring co-ordinated SEN provision within the Borough as a whole. The LEA will also ensure Pupil Referral Units have an appropriate SEN policy.

Arrangements for Co-ordination and Collaboration with Other Leas

Pupils from Gateshead attend special school and units in other LEAs and children from other areas attend schools in Gateshead. Gateshead Council is committed to developing effective partnerships with other LEAs to ensure the needs of pupils with SEN are met. Gateshead LEA will seek to ensure all schools are supported in ensuring that the following are in place.

- Open and effective communication.
- Clear and agreed procedures.
- Arrangements for early review of placements should any difficulties arise.

Sharing Good Practice

Gateshead Council values the opportunity to celebrate success and will continue to support schools and settings with the identification and sharing of good practice. The Council seeks to build on and improve communication with and between schools and will maintain and develop an effective programme of continual professional development to ensure SEN issues and initiatives are discussed fully.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The LEA will continue to update and develop its procedures for monitoring the implementation of the SEN policy and evaluating its impact on provision for pupils with SEN.

The LEA ensures the policy is subject to a regular cycle of monitoring, evaluation and review with reference to the following success criteria:

- an improvement in the quality of SEN policies as judged through systematic monitoring of a sample submitted to the LEA;
- a year on year improvement in the quality of Individual Education Plans as judged by a random sample submitted to the LEA;
- significant progress towards ensuring statutory assessments are completed within prescribed time-scales;
- annual growth in the numbers of teachers and support staff completing relevant training with reference to the priorities of the Education Development Plan;
- an improvement in the quality of procedures for setting targets for pupils with SEN as identified through the LEA Themed Visit Programme.

The LEA has produced the “**Professionals’ Handbook – SEN in Gateshead**” as an addendum to its policy statement. This document outlines the Council’s procedures and practices with regard to the Education Act 1996, associated Code of Practice and SEN and Disability Act 2001.