



# How your child with a **specific learning difficulty (SpLD)** is supported in school



## **Information for parents and carers**

This leaflet provides examples of what you and your child can expect from schools through the graduated approach for supporting Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).



The term specific learning difficulty (SpLD) refers to a difference or difficulty people have with particular aspects of learning.

**Difficulties may be as a result of a weakness in one or more of the following areas:**

- Memory
- Processing speed
- Phonological awareness (the ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds in words)
- Visual perception
- Speech and language
- Motor skills

**Although each child with an SpLD will have a different group of problems, your child may:**

- Have a slower reading pace
- Find decoding words difficult
- Struggle to recall what they have read
- Have difficulty following lines of print
- Have had speech and language problems when they were younger
- Take longer than others to finish a piece of work
- Have a weak awareness of phonology
- Have little knowledge of spelling rules
- Reverse letters, words or numbers
- Have difficulty copying
- Find it difficult to follow oral instructions
- Have trouble retaining what they have learned
- Find it difficult to be organised
- Have difficulty recalling basic number facts and times tables
- Be resistant to help/support
- Struggle to make progress despite extra help and support

**Please note:** Children develop at different rates and may have difficulties with some of these areas, without having an SpLD.

# Common specific learning difficulties

- Dyslexia is a language-based difficulty which primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. It is characterised by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory and processing speed.
- Dyscalculia is a mathematical difficulty where a child has impairments in learning basic arithmetic facts and has a weak understanding of number values and quantities.
- Dyspraxia is a form of developmental coordination disorder (DCD) that affects fine and/or gross motor coordination. Your child may have additional problems planning, organising and carrying out movements in the right order. Dyspraxia can also affect articulation and speech, perception and thought.

The type and level of support required will depend on your child's needs. Schools will use the graduated approach, a system to identify and meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. Most children and young people with an SpLD will make good progress and achieve well when the right support is in place.

## Quality First Teaching

Quality First Teaching is high quality teaching which provides appropriate learning opportunities to all pupils, whatever their individual needs. It is the first step of the graduated approach in responding to pupils who have, or may have, SEND. Staff knowledge and understanding of SEND is a key factor to Quality First Teaching.



All staff are also required to have knowledge and understanding of the SEND Code of Practice 2014 and The Equalities Act 2010.

You will be involved in decisions about your child at every stage of the graduated approach and all staff who come into contact with your child should be made aware of their needs and given strategies to cope with them.

## Examples of what might be expected from this level of school support:

### School staff will:

- Build your child's confidence by providing lots of opportunities to do the things that they can manage, ensuring that tasks are at the appropriate level.
- Provide small group work based on an identified need.
- Find ways to prevent your child becoming distracted by sitting them next to quiet students, or near the teacher.
- Help your child to find other ways to do the things which cause them problems such as using a computer, calculator or word mats with spelling support.
- Allocate a set amount of time for classroom tasks and not always insist the task is finished.
- Allocate a set amount of time on homework tasks without your child always having to finish the task.
- Provide written instructions if your child has trouble copying things off a whiteboard.
- Encourage your child to explain what they have to do to check their understanding.
- Break verbal instructions into manageable simple steps.
- Support memory with visual checklists.
- Have a system for setting targets and tracking your child's progress.
- Provide examples of what to do (e.g. a method to follow in maths).
- Offer adaptations such as pencil grips, and screen contrasts.
- Promote positive examples of diversity through the curriculum.



# SEN Support Plans

Some children will require SEN support which should be 'additional to' or 'different from' what schools provide for all pupils.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and the teacher will work with you and your child to create an SEN Support Plan which should be reviewed three times a year. This will be based around your child's strengths and needs and will identify outcomes for your child that will be agreed with you.

It will be important to identify the main characteristic of your child's need (primary need). However, support plans will identify all the needs of your child within four broad areas.

## The four broad areas of need are:

- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health
- Communication and interaction
- Sensory and physical

## Targeted SEN support might include:

- A specialist teacher from the Cognition and Learning Team to provide assessment and advice.
- Increased differentiation (adapting lessons to meet your child's needs and abilities) by presentation, outcome, timing, scaffolding and additional resources.
- Increased support through writing frames/scaffolds, visual prompts and word banks, sentence openers.
- Access to individualised and/or small group support, which may include help to develop skills.
- Individual tailored support to help them to achieve outcomes.





- Use of a range of multi-sensory (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic) methods across all curriculum areas, e.g. alphabet arcs and magnetic letters to support spelling and word reading; in maths use manipulatives such as bead strings, multilink and hundred squares.
- Timetabled opportunities to repeat tasks and reinforce learning.
- Alternative methods of recording such as PowerPoint, oral presentations, posters, mind-maps, labelling images.
- The use of specific tailored programs such as: The Power of 2, Nessy Reading and Spelling or Lexia.
- Modifications such as additional time, enlarged texts.
- A coloured overlay assessment to reduce visual stress and use of appropriate coloured overlays or coloured writing paper.
- Use of IT programs and apps to reinforce previous learning.
- Opportunities to use assistive technology to aid writing such as Clicker 7, WriteOnline, TextHelp, CoWriter.



# Education, Health and Care Plans

Most children with an SpLD do not require an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

However, if this is the case, before a school can apply for a statutory assessment of your child's needs they must do all they can to support your child and must be able to show that they have taken "sufficient relevant and purposeful action".

You and your child will be the focus of the assessment process. The assessment will provide valuable information to help decide the most appropriate support for your child, and may result in an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan).

## If your child has an EHC Plan:

- Mainstream staff will be given advice by specialist teachers and will be trained to appropriate levels.
- The support for your child will be detailed in the EHC Plan and your child will have an individual learning programme.
- Teaching and learning styles and resources will be modified to meet your child's needs.
- We will undertake careful planning when your child is moving to the next stage of education (transition).
- They may be eligible for planned specialist arrangements for exams.
- Your child will use specialist equipment where required.
- We will work with your child to develop social and emotional skills alongside educational attainment.
- We will undertake an annual statutory review in addition to termly reviews.



# Additional Support

## The Local Offer

Information for parents and carers on a broad range of SEN and disability issues and support can be found on the Local Offer website. SEN planning tools can also be found in the 'for providers' section of the website.

**[www.countydurhamfamilies.info/localoffer](http://www.countydurhamfamilies.info/localoffer)**

**Telephone 03000 26 99 95**

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## Durham SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

Durham SENDIASS supports parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and children and young people with SEND. All services provided are confidential and impartial.

**Email [sendiass@durham.gov.uk](mailto:sendiass@durham.gov.uk)**

**Telephone 03000 267 003**

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## Making Changes Together

Making Changes Together (MCT) is a group for parents and carers of children with SEND. MCT work with professionals in County Durham to improve services for children and young people with SEND.

**[www.mctdurham.co.uk](http://www.mctdurham.co.uk)**

**Telephone 0191 587 3541**

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