

Victoria Road Montessori policy on special educational needs (SEN)

Introduction

All children should be given every opportunity to develop through a wide range of experiences that encourage curiosity, exploration and learning.

For children who may be experiencing any difficulties, early identification is vital. In order that they are included in the life of the setting they must be appropriately supported by all practitioners in gaining access to the full range of provision.

Practitioners must work together to ensure a consistent yet flexible approach to enable all children to succeed.

To enable the children in our setting to have maximum opportunity to learn and develop we shall:

- provide opportunities for all the children to develop a good self image
- ensure that both adults and children show respect for all cultures, religions and people with additional needs
- work in partnership with the parents/carers of the children in our setting
- offer emotional stability and security in the setting environment through our planning and working timetable
- offer opportunities for children to experience appropriate high quality play experiences that encourage curiosity and a desire to know more
- provide opportunities for the children to develop independence and an ability to control their emotions
- provide opportunities for the children to be involved in their learning by offering choices in activities and learning experiences
- monitor and assess children's progress and provide experiences which meet their current needs and interests

The principles of the SEN policy

- A child with SEN should have their needs met by all members of staff in the setting
- The SEN of children will normally be met in a mainstream setting
- The views of the child should be listened to and taken into account, choices should be offered in learning experiences through observation of the child's chosen activities and the child's ability within that activity
- Parents/carers will be asked to play a supporting role in their child's education
- Children with SEN will be offered full access to a broad, balanced and relevant education, based on the Early Learning Goals
- Staff should adopt a flexible approach that takes account of children's SEN.

Definition of special educational needs

(Education Act 1996, Section 3121 Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001)

A child has a special educational need (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A child has a learning difficulty if they:

1. have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age or have a disability which prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools/settings within the area of the local education authority
2. are under five and fall within the definition above or would so do if special educational provision was not made for the child.

A child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or medium of communication of the home is different from the language in which he or she is or will be taught.

Special educational provision means:

1. for a child of two or over, educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of the child's age in schools, other than special schools, in the area

The aims of the special educational needs policy should:

- ensure procedures are in place which will enable early identification of the child with SEN
- define clearly the approach and provision for children with SEN by all adults within the setting
- ensure that parents/carers are contacted as soon as any concerns are identified in order to work closely with them to optimise their child's educational opportunities
- ensure that all staff are aware of their individual responsibility to provide for the needs of children with SEN
- ensure that staff are familiar with, and can use, the systems and procedures in place to identify, monitor, record and review children with SEN
- ensure that children in the setting with SEN have learning and play opportunities equal to their peers
- ensure that children in the setting with SEN are offered a range of ways in which they can access the curriculum
- ensure that procedures are in place for contacting and liaising with outside agencies
- ensure a regular (at least annual) review of the practice and policy of the setting when providing for children with SEN.

Roles and responsibilities

Provision for children with SEN is the concern of everyone in the setting. In addition to the setting's head teacher or manager and the SEN coordinator (SENCO), all other staff have a responsibility to be aware, and meet the needs, of children with SEN.

The setting's management team:

- should work with the head of the setting and all practitioners, paid and voluntary, to identify and determine the setting's policy and approach to SEN.
- ensure that the necessary provision is made for any child who has SEN
- ensure that all staff in the setting are aware of the importance of identifying and providing for those children who have SEN
- ensure that where the 'responsible person' has been informed by the LEA/Health Service and other relevant outside agency about a child with SEN, then all the relevant information is passed to all practitioners
- should consult with the LEA and, as appropriate, the funding agency, and governing bodies of other settings when it seems to them necessary or desirable in the interests of co-ordinated special educational provision in the area as a whole
- must report annually to parents on the setting's policy for children with SEN
- should ensure that children with SEN in the setting join in the activities of the setting together with children who do not have SEN, so far as is reasonably practical and compatible with the efficient education of the children with whom they are educated and the efficient use of resources
- should ensure that all practitioners in the setting are aware of, and able to attend, relevant Early Years training.

The head of the setting:

- has responsibility for the day-to-day management of all aspects of the setting's work, including provision for children with SEN
- works closely with the management team and keeps them and their colleagues fully informed
- also works closely with the SENCO on any matters relating to SEN to ensure the best provision is offered to the children.

The SENCO should:

- work closely with the head and all colleagues in the setting and have day-to-day responsibility for the operation of the setting's SEN policy and for co-ordinating provision and opportunities for children with SEN
- communicate with parents of children who may have SEN, and with professionals about children with SEN in the setting
- be available to give advice and support to colleagues in the setting
- take the lead in further assessment of the child's particular strengths and needs; in discussion with colleagues, the SENCO should plan future support for the child and initiate the subsequent reviewing of the action taken

- ensure that appropriate Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are in operation
- ensure that the records of children with SEN are informative and updated
- maintain an up to date register of children with SEN in the setting
- regularly update their knowledge and practice through training.

All practitioners in the setting should:

- be involved in the development of the SEN policy and be fully aware of the procedures for identifying, assessing and making appropriate provision for children with SEN
- work closely with the SENCO or named person when planning provision for children with SEN
- be responsible for working with the children with SEN on a daily basis and for planning and delivering an individualised programme

All adults in the setting involved in the provision of early learning have a responsibility to develop close links with parents/carers to ensure optimum understanding of the needs of the child and the benefits of collaborative working.

The SEN policy in practice

Working in partnership with parents and carers

Parents have a unique knowledge and understanding of their child's needs and the best way of supporting them. Parents should therefore be fully consulted throughout their child's education especially if there is any cause for concern. The involvement of parents at all stages is a basic principle of the SEN code of practice. To ensure the best chance of success for the child it is essential that the setting and parents work in partnership.

(When the term parent is used, it is intended to include anyone who has care of the children)

- parents should be regarded as partners in every aspect of their child's development and education in order that there is a consistent approach between the home and the setting
- make sure that information to parents is clear and easily understood; this includes concisely explaining the setting's expectations, planning, provision and assessments
- demonstrate positive and professional attitudes in all communications with parents
- be sensitive to parent's feelings
- focus on the child's strengths as well as their areas of additional need
- ensure parents understand procedures, are offered support preparing their contributions and are given documents to be discussed well before any meeting
- respect the validity of differing perspectives and seek constructive ways of reconciling different viewpoints if they arise
- respect the diverse cultural backgrounds of parents
- respect the differing needs parents themselves may have, such as a disability or communication barrier
- recognize the need for flexibility in the timing and structure of meetings
- keep parents informed of local services which provide additional support (advice, drop-in centres, holiday activities, etc)

- inform parents that records will be kept of any consultations between the parent and staff in the setting. The member of staff involved in the consultation will keep the records up to date
- encourage parents to come into the setting and, if appropriate, work with their child under staff supervision

Participation of the children

All children have rights and should be involved in making decisions and exercising choice. From an early age children should be given opportunities and encouraged to choose play activities, to select resources and materials and to share their wishes and feelings with staff and their family. The Early Learning Goals highlight the importance of children's ability to develop capabilities, gain confidence and to have opportunities to develop a range of social and educational skills. The provision should be carefully planned in order for the children to build on their capabilities. Confident young children, who know that their feelings and opinions are valued and who can practise making choices will be more effective learners.

Every opportunity is made to celebrate the achievement and progress of the children in the setting.

Consultation with young children can be through many different communication strategies, including play, art, music and video as well as verbal communication. We build partnerships with other professionals to develop our skills and understanding and to address any special communication needs.

Identification, assessment and provision for children with SEN

Some children may enter the setting with their SEN already identified. If this is not the case, it is the aim of the setting to identify through recorded observations and other evidence, as soon as possible, any child who may have SEN and to put into place strategies to support the learning of the child.

Evidence should be collected for each child indicating their capabilities and achievement using:

- assessment/individual profile information
- recorded observations by staff of the child in the setting
- any other written assessment material that is appropriate

Should concerns arise about achievement and progress, staff should then undertake a more in-depth assessment using the following framework

- discuss with parents or other practitioners in the setting
- identify child's chosen activities at home through discussion with parents
- identify child's chosen activities in the setting using observation by staff
- identify and record child's skills and abilities within chosen activities, both at home and in the setting

Individual provision that is made for the child needs to be recorded in clear observable statements through:

- setting short and long term targets in the child's learning experiences

- breaking down learning into small individual steps for the child to ensure progress and success

Access to provision

- Staff should work to achieve an agreed whole-group approach to SEN as a continuing development to the provision offered to children
- All children, including those with SEN should have access to the whole range of learning opportunities and activities
- All staff should be able to plan differentiated tasks to meet the needs of all children
- Staff should ensure children have the opportunity to work and play in a variety of groups
- Parents should be kept informed and given opportunities to be involved in their child's learning
- Support from outside professionals and/or the LEA should be sought to ensure the children have every opportunity to enhance their learning
- Records should be kept up to date and discussions noted with parents and other professionals to ensure a cohesive approach is offered to the child and family
- Reviews should be held at least once a term to monitor the child's progress and plan for the future. Parents should be invited to these meetings
- Staff should be encouraged and supported to attend appropriate training to develop their skills in the area of SEN.

Access to provision and support for children with SEN should be given in accordance with the guidelines of the DFES SEN Code of Practice

Graduated responses to individual needs

The Early Years Learning Record (see appendix)

This is for all children. It is a continuing record of progress and attainment in the six areas of the Early Learning Goals.

Most children will make appropriate progress as they become confident in the nursery setting, make friends with other children and become familiar with the expectations and routines within the setting. There will be variation in the rate of progress across the group of children and, for some children, there may be recurrent concerns which do not appear to be resolved over time. During this period observations should have been collated for all aspects of learning (in a range of groupings). If concerns persist, the next step for the setting is to take "Early Years Action".

Early Years Action

The reasons for intervention through Early Years Action may be staff concerns about the child who, despite receiving appropriate early education, appears to:

- make little or no progress even when teaching methods have been particularly targeted to improve the child's area of need
- continue working at levels significantly below those expected for children of a similar age in particular areas

- have continuing emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, which are not helped by the behaviour management techniques used in the setting
- have sensory or physical needs and continues to make minimal or no progress, despite the provision of personal aids and equipment
- have communication and/or interaction difficulties and requires specific individual support in order to access learning

When the head of the setting, the SENCO and the staff agree that Early Years Action is appropriate, the SENCO discusses concerns with the parents to clarify and share perceptions of the child's needs. These may be within a number of broad areas:

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- behaviour, emotional and social development
- sensory and/or physical development

The Early Years Action taken by the setting will fall into four main strands:

- assessment, planning and review
- grouping for teaching/learning purposes
- additional resources (materials or human resources)
- curriculum and teaching methods

For many children Early Years Action will provide sufficient intervention and enrichment to enable the child to make progress within a supportive context

Practitioners should continue to collect evidence as before and to employ the strategies listed for Early Years Action in the Foundation Stage SEN Audit Criteria

For some children further intervention may be necessary, in which case the next stage will be Early Years Action Plus

Early Years Action Plus

Action Plus is characterised by the involvement of external support services who can help staff with advice on IEPs and targets, provide more specialist input in the form of assessments, advice on the use of new and specialist strategies or materials and, in some cases, provide support for particular activities

A request for outside help is made by the SENCO, staff in the setting and in consultation with parents. Involvement of outside agencies could be decided upon for the following reasons:

- the child continues to make little or no progress in specific areas over a long period of time
- the child continues to work at an early years curriculum substantially below that expected of children of a similar age
- the child has emotional or behavioural difficulties which substantially and regularly interfere with the child's own learning, or that of the group, despite an individualised behaviour management programme

- the child has sensory or physical needs and requires additional equipment or regular for direct intervention or advice by practitioners from a specialist service
- the child has continuing communication or interaction difficulties that impede the development of social relationships and cause substantial barriers to learning

Other agencies

Where personnel from other agencies such as LEA support staff, health service, social services, Portage team, Sure Start team and the private and voluntary sector are also involved with the child, it will be a priority to liaise closely with these personnel to ensure the child is offered a collaborative programme allowing all possible opportunities to enhance their learning and development.

Referral for a statutory assessment

If the help given by practitioners through Early Years Action and Action Plus is not sufficiently effective to enable the child to progress satisfactorily, it will then be necessary, in consultation with parents and any other agencies involved, to consider whether a statutory multi-disciplinary assessment may be appropriate. If it is felt that a statement of SEN is necessary, this will be drawn up stating the needs and best provision

Monitoring

- Staff in the setting should understand and respect the need for confidentiality of information about the child and family contained in files
- All staff have access to records
- Meetings, discussions and conversations between parents and staff and other agencies and staff should be recorded. It is the responsibility of the member of staff involved to record these instances
- All records should be continually updated and written with clearly observable outcomes
- Informal reviews with parents and staff should take place on a weekly basis to ensure early identification of any concerns and also to note and celebrate success
- The child's progress should be formally reviewed each term with contributions sought from parents and any additional support staff
- Long and short term goals should be re-set on the evidence collected and reviewed

Moving to statutory provision or other setting

- All records should be made available to the new setting or provision, with the consent of parents
- Visits by the parent and child to the new setting or provision should be arranged wherever possible
- Staff should make contact with staff in the new setting to share information and assist in a happy transition for the child

Complaints Procedure

- All complaints about SEN in the setting will be responded to as quickly as possible

- In the first instance, the SENCO or named person for SEN will investigate the complaint in consultation with the head of the setting, and any staff involved with the child and family.

Criteria for evaluating the success of the setting's SEN policy

- Clearly written records showing evidence of the child's progression
- The positive self-image of all the children in the setting and their ability to be valued members of the group
- Parents are involved in the education of their child and are confident to approach members of staff
- Annual review of the SEN policy, procedures and practice.

Appendix
Early years action (IEP)

Name of Child (male/female):
Date of birth:
Date of start of Early Years Action:
Name of setting:
Name of SENCO:
Strengths ("can do" statements)
Current difficulties
Targets (small steps/achievable/specific targets)

Strategies

Resources (people/materials/time)

Review date:
Comments on progress

Early years action plus (request for external support)

Early Years Setting:
Telephone number:
Address:
Name of pupil:
Date of Birth:
Start date of Early Years Action:
Name of SENCO:
Months attended: Part time: Full time:
Reasons for referral:
Please enclose current Individual education Plan
Please ensure that parents have been informed of this referral
Signed: Manager of Setting:
SENCO: Date:
Return to:

Early years action plus (IEP)

(drawn up by SENCO in consultation with parents, outside agencies and staff)

Name of Child (male/female):
Date of birth:
Date of start of Early Years Action Plus IEP
Name of setting:
Name of SENCO:
Strengths ("can do" statements)
Difficulties
Parents' observations

Advice from the following external agencies (with dates)

Targets (small steps/achievable/specific targets)

Strategies

Resources (time/materials/people)

Progress reports (dated)

Review date: