



COLD HARBOUR
C of E Primary School

GROWING, LEARNING, ACHIEVING TOGETHER

Highland Close, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK3 7PD. Telephone: (01908) 270377 Fax: (01908) 375562
Headteacher: Louise Aird B.A., P.G.C.E., N.P.Q.H,
general@coldharbourschool.org.uk

The SEND reforms: what parent carers need to know and what they need to do

Dear Parents and families,

The purpose of this lengthy, but necessary, letter is to provide information for families about the forthcoming changes in relation to children who are currently supported in school and registered as having 'Special Educational Needs'. Whilst we are still awaiting the Local Offer from Milton Keynes Council, we are working pro-actively to ensure that staff are trained and fully aware of the new legislation. By ensuring that staff are well informed, it is then anticipated that we will be able to better support families in making the transition from the old legislation to the new. Our SEN surgery will be running again during Parents' Evening and information leaflets will be published in September about how this school will handle class teacher referrals as well as monitoring the impact of our work with vulnerable children.

Below are a series of FAQs which I hope you will find useful as we enter the new phase of SEND provision in school. Also attached is an open letter from Edward Timpson (Minister for Children and families) which provides the government's view on changes. As our practices and approaches become more embedded I am certain that our children will benefit hugely from the new Code of Practice. It is very clear for you as parents that this legislation puts the progression, success and achievement of your child firmly in your hands as much as the Education, Health and Care professionals. The days of being told what we are going to do will shortly come to an end and our new approach will be centred around 'What are WE going to do?' and 'What do WE want to see xxx achieve at the end?'

Leadership of SEND will also evolve in time for September as I assume the strategic Lead SENCo role with Mrs Gilbert undertaking the operational Associate SENCo role. Both of us can help and advise any families at any time so please feel free to approach either of us so that we can work together for the benefit of your child.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Aird', written over a large, faint yellow background graphic of a hand holding a dove.

Louise Aird
Head Teacher

What is happening?

The Children and Families Act will change the way in which children and young people with Special Educational Needs and disabilities are supported at school and in the community. The Act will be implemented in stages starting in September 2014.

What is in the Act?

The Act responds to concerns parents carers have raised about the SEND system over the last few years. It includes some key principles to improve parent carers experiences. These include:

- **More Participation:** the Act includes new responsibilities on local authorities and others to make sure parent carers and young people are much more involved in decisions that affect their lives. It also makes clear that local authorities and health partners should work with parent carers and young people to improve services across their local area for example through the parent carer forums.
- **Better Outcomes:** the Act requires education, health and social care services to look at how they support children and young people in a way that improves progress and supports the outcomes they want and need in their lives.
- **Better joint working:** the Act requires services that families use, in particular education, health and social care to work more closely together and commission services together. This should improve the experiences of children, young people and their parent carers.

What does this mean in real life?

Education, Health and Care Plans will replace Statements of Special Educational Needs and Learning Disability Assessments (LDAs). From September 2014, no new statements or LDAs (applicable to children older than Primary age) will be available. In stages, over the next few years, children with an existing statement will have their statement transferred to an Education, Health and Care Plan. There will be agreed procedures for the changeover and parent carers and young people will have a say in these. Existing rights, for example rights of appeal, will continue during the transfer.

Education, Health and Care Plans can continue to support young people up to the age of 25 if the Local authority considers that the young person needs more time to complete their education or training.

SEN support will replace School Action and School Action Plus. Schools will still be required to identify children who need additional support, involve parent carers and children and young people in planning how to meet these needs and call on specialists from outside the school when they need to.

Local offer from September 2014 every local authority will be required to have a "local offer" which informs parent carers and young people with SEN or disabilities what is provided in their local area, including what to expect from local early years providers, schools, colleges, health and social care. In addition it will include information on how decisions are made about how services are allocated, how to request a personal budget, how to access more specialist support and how to complain or appeal. Local authorities must involve parent carers, children and young people in developing their local offer.

Information and advice Local authorities already have to make information and advice available to parent carers about SEN, through parent partnership services. From September, local authorities must make information and advice available that also covers disability, health and social care and is also available directly to young people as well as parent carers - building on the services (like parent partnership services) they already have in place.

How can I find out what early years providers, schools, colleges, social care and health should do?

A new SEND Code of Practice will be published. It will set out how decisions should be made for children and young people with Special Educational Needs or disabilities. This is statutory guidance and early years providers, all schools, colleges, local authorities and health partners **must** have regard to it when they decide what to do.

How can I get involved?

Parent carers can get involved in planning for these changes in their local area. Their local parent carer forum is involved in working strategically with the local authority and health partners. Parent carers can join their local parent carer forum and can make a real difference by sharing their ideas and thoughts. It is always up to you how you participate in your forum – it may be just by being a member, or you may want to get more actively involved and make sure those who are making decisions know what parent carers think. You can also talk to the SENCO at your child's school and ask them what they are doing to prepare for these changes.

What can I do if I am worried about how this will affect my child?

If you are worried about your individual child, please contact your local Parent Partnership Service for advice and support. You can find details of your local Parent Partnership Service here: <http://www.parentpartnership.org.uk/>

You can also call the Contact a Family SEND freephone helpline 0808 808 3555 (9.30 – 5pm Mon-Fri) email: helpline@cafamily.org.uk

When is this going to happen?

The law will start to change the arrangements in September 2014. Most local areas are making preparations and plans for this right now. It will take some time for local areas to make all of the changes that are required, so changes will take place over a number of years.

Glossary

SEN: special educational needs

SEND: special educational needs and disabilities

Children and Families Act: Part 3 includes new laws on SEN and disability, which will be brought into force from 1 September 2014.

SEN Code of Practice: this is statutory guidance for people and organisations who have duties towards children and young people with SEN. The current Code continues to apply until September 2014 and some parts of it will continue after that. A new Code will be issued in 2014 under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act.

Statutory guidance: where statutory guidance applies to someone, they cannot ignore it and they must have a good reason for doing something different from what the guidance tells them.

Parent Carer Forum: a Parent Carer Forum (PCF) is a group of parents and carers of disabled children who volunteer their time and work with local authorities, education, health and other providers to make sure the services they plan and deliver meet the needs of disabled children and families. In England there are parent carer forums in almost all local authority areas. You can find out more about Parent Carer Forums, and details of your local forums here. www.cafamily.org.uk/parentcarerparticipation and www.nnpcf.org.uk

Parent Partnership Service: Parent Partnership Services (PPS) offer advice and support to parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs. They are statutory services; this means there has to be one in every local authority. They are free, impartial and confidential services. You can find out more about PPSs here. <http://www.parentpartnership.org.uk/>

School Action / School Action plus: under the current Code of Practice, schools support children with SEND, but no statement, at School Action or School Action Plus, depending on the level of support needed and whether specialist expertise is being provided from outside the school. Under the new Code of Practice, School Action or school Action Plus will be replaced with 'SEN support' and, in discussion with parents, schools will be expected to provide the right level of support and seek external advice whenever it is needed.



Department
for Education

Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

0370 000 2288

www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Dear Parents,

NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

This September we're making changes to the law for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The new law will result in changes to the way you and your child receive support from your local council, health and social care services and your child's nursery, school or college. I therefore wanted to write to you with information about what this means for you.

A better family centred approach

Many parents have welcomed the changes the new law brings, particularly the greater focus on personal goals, increased family involvement and improved rights and protections for young people in further education and training. I know that some parents remain concerned about the changes and are nervous about the speed of change. I want to reassure you. This is not about cutting services but about creating a better system that puts you and your child first. It will take time and the changes will be gradually introduced over the next three and a half years. I can also reassure you that the current protections you and your child have will continue and, in many cases, be enhanced further.

From statements to education, health and care plans

We are replacing statements of special educational needs and Learning Difficulty Assessments with a single education, health and care (EHC) plan for children and young people with complex needs. The EHC plan will place much more emphasis on personal goals and will describe the support your child will receive while they are in education or training. We're also introducing personal budgets to accompany this plan to give you more control over the support you and your child receive. The amount you would be given, and how it can be spent, is something that you would agree with your council.

From School Action and School Action Plus to SEN support

For children with less complex needs but who still require help we are introducing a new system called special educational needs (SEN) support which replaces School Action and School Action Plus (and the equivalent in nurseries). It will also be available in colleges. The process will be similar but it will be less about counting the hours or resources given to your child at nursery, school or college and more about what your child has achieved as a result.

Moving to the new system

If your child already has a statement or Learning Difficulty Assessment they will be transferred to the new system within the next three and a half years. The transfer is likely to happen around transition points in your child's education such as when they move from primary to secondary school. Your local council will let you know when you are due to switch and there'll be Independent Supporters on hand to make the transfer as simple as possible. The legislation relating to statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments will be withdrawn when everyone has completed the transition to the new system.

If your child currently receives help at school through School Action or School Action Plus (or the equivalent at nursery) the transfer to SEN support will take place between September 2014 and spring 2015. It is likely to be during one of your child's termly reviews.

Concerns about losing support

Some parents have expressed concern that their child will lose support because of the changes. I can assure you that no one will be left without support just because of the changes. We have not changed the definition of special educational needs or the basis on which councils determine whether a child needs a statutory assessment.

Next steps

I hope this letter helps answer some of your questions about the changes. I've focused on the aspects of the reforms that you are likely to be most interested in at the moment but there are lots of other changes being introduced to improve the system. This includes: improved coordination between local authorities, health, care and education providers; greater rights and protections for young people in further education or training; and more control for families.

Your local council will shortly be publishing a 'local offer' which lists the support and services you and your child can access under the new system. If you'd like to get involved in developing this speak to your council or your local Parent Carer Forum.

We'll be issuing a parent and a young person's guide to the new 0 to 25 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice later in the year and we'll continue to work closely with our partners to help you and your child prepare for the changes. In the meantime you can speak to the Council for Disabled Children (who have published a guide for parents) Contact a Family, the National Network of Parent Carer Forums or your local council for advice. You can also find more information about the changes on gov.uk.



EDWARD TIMPSON

Minister for Children and Families