



Sunday 15th September 2019

Dear Parent / Carer,

The collection and recording of standard information about pupils in schools is essential for the Department of Education and the Education Authority to assist in policy development and planning; identification of current and future funding needs; monitoring trends and providing answers to queries about data (specifically about pupils with special educational needs.)

Most children have their learning needs met in class through the teacher differentiating the tasks to match the ability level. This means that all children are given Literacy tasks and read the reading books that matches their ability level, the same is true with Numeracy. From time to time children, for a wide variety of reasons, can "hit a stumbling block" with a particular concept/s. They might require some additional support to help them at this point. When this additional support is required by pupils we as a school are obliged to record how many children we are providing this support for.

The Department of Education has developed new guidance to assist schools with the recording of children with special education needs (SEN) and medical diagnoses. Guidance on the process for placing children on the SEN Register can be accessed on the DE website at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/sen-and-medical-categories-guidance-schools>. A full review of SEN categories was undertaken in 2017/18 and consequently a new list of SEN categories and associated descriptions has been created. This guidance is used to help schools determine the most appropriate SEN category or categories which can be recorded for pupils with SEN - this will allow the creation of the schools SEN Register.

Pupils with a medical diagnosis/es who do not have an associated special educational need should be recorded on a school's Medical Register only. This means that a pupil with a medical need only will now not be in receipt of an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Any pupil with a medical diagnosis who requires special educational provision (over and above the class teacher making "reasonable adjustments") or has been assessed in other SEN categories should be recorded on the school's Medical Register and also on the SEN Register.

Stages of the Code of Practice

Stage 1: This part of the Code of Practice is led by your child's class teacher who will identify your child's difficulties and list the actions he/she will put in place to address the identified difficulties. The teacher will put in place strategies which may include additional teacher attention. The actions will normally take place over a period of time (possibly one or two terms). Your child's progress will be monitored and a termly review will take place. Following the review, the following decisions may be made:

- Remove the pupil from the SEN register
- Continue at Stage 1
- Move to Stage 2



Stage 2: This stage is led by the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). An Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be drawn up by the school. Some children will be bringing home an IEP this week. As a parent, you will be asked to sign the IEP to show your agreement and commitment to the plan. Further strategies will be used by the school to address your child's special educational needs, including use of the Resource to Support Children with Special Educational Needs.

In Victoria PS we can also offer children on IEPs at Stage 2 (P3 – P7) small group support sessions once or twice a week in Numeracy and/or Literacy skills. The IEP should be reviewed on a termly basis. Following the review, the school can decide to:

- Remove the pupil from the SEN register
- Move back to Stage 1
- Continue at Stage 2
- Move to Stage 3

Stage 3: The school will continue to be responsible for the pupil's SEN's and will **also seek outside help** which will be dependent on the pupil's Special Educational Needs e.g. learning or medical. This may involve your child being referred to:

- Stage 3 support services (e.g. Thornfield Outreach Service for speech and language, Behaviour Support Service, Literacy Support Service, Early Years Intervention Support Service, Autism Advisory and Intervention Service etc.)
- Educational Psychology Service
- Health & Social Care Trust/Allied Health Professionals like Community Speech and Language therapists, Community Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Pediatricians etc.

Your child's progress will be monitored and the following can be considered:

- Remove the pupil from the SEN register
- Move back to Stage 1 or Stage 2
- Continue at Stage 3
- Move to Stage 4

What happens if my child is still struggling?

If your child is not making progress, the Education Authority, working with parents, school and other agencies, may consider carrying out a Statutory Assessment of your child's Special Educational Needs. A Statutory Assessment is only necessary in a very small minority of cases and a request for a statutory assessment does not always lead to a statement of special educational needs.

Stage 4: Statutory Assessment? A Statutory Assessment is a formal and detailed process to find out what your child's special needs are, and what additional help they may need in school. During Statutory Assessment, important decisions are involved that may shape your child's schooling for some time to come and the process cannot be rushed. The decisions must be based on comprehensive information. While the Education Authority is carrying out Statutory Assessment your child should continue to receive help and support from the school until the assessment process is completed. You can also ask the school or the educational psychologist for advice as to how you can help your child meanwhile. The Education Authority will consider all of the available information and decide whether or not an assessment is required. If the decision is not to proceed with a Statutory Assessment you will be informed of



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the reasons for the decision in writing. If you do not agree with the decision you will be given details on how to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal.

Stage 5: Stage 5 of the Code of Practice refers to the time when the Education Authority makes and maintains a Statement of Special Educational Needs on a child. At this point after a Statement of Special Educational Needs has been issued the Education Authority may authorize a classroom assistant to be employed for a designated amount of time to help provide additional support for the pupil. In Victoria Primary a school of approximately 430 pupils we currently have only 3 children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

We hope that this information will help parents / carers to understand the Special Educational Needs process. Further information can be obtained from speaking with Miss Minnis, the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator.

Yours sincerely,

Mr C. Fulton
Principal

Miss J. Minnis
Special Educational Needs Coordinator