WHAT ARE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS?
The Four Broad Areas of Need

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) describe the difficulties and disabilities that can make it more difficult for a child to learn. They can sometimes also affect how a child/young person engages with others. Children learn important skills as they develop and will usually hit developmental milestones about the same time as other children, but not always. Not all children are the same and a missed milestone might not mean a problem. However, if you are concerned, talk to your doctor or health visitor as they may refer your child for assessment.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 0-25 is statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people with SEND.
Chapter 6.15 of the COP says a pupil has SEND where their learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision, namely provision different from or additional to that normally available to pupils of the same age.

Four Broad Areas of Need

The SEND code of practice highlights four broad areas of SEND needs. Some children may have needs in just one area whereas others may have needs that overlap one or more areas.

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

This is when a child or young person is noticeably behind children of the same age in developing speech and/or language skills. These difficulties can sometimes make it hard for children/young people to make sense of language or understand how to communicate effectively with others.

Children who have language difficulties may:

- Have speech and language difficulties
- Stammer
- Selective mute
- Have difficulties with grammar and concepts (he/she/they-yesterday/today/tomorrow-in/under/behind.
- May need extra time to process verbal language
- May take language literally and struggle to understand jokes and sarcasm
- May not be able to express their views, ask for help or accurately retell events that take place.

- Struggle to communicate with familiar/unfamiliar adults and peers- Communication may appear inappropriate.
- Struggles with eye contact, body language and facial expressions
- Conflict at unstructured times
- May find social communication/interaction difficult
- May struggle with the unspoken social rules of communication (turn taking, two- way conversation)

If you have any concerns, you can ask your nursery, school or doctor to refer you to an audiologist (who will check your child's hearing) or a speech and language professional for an assessment.

COGNITION AND LEARNING

This refers to a child or young person's thinking skills; their ability to process, retain and recall information. These skills are the core skills your brain uses to think, read, learn, remember, reason and pay attention.

Learning difficulties can be general or specific and related to one or more areas of the curriculum.

Children who have cognition and learning difficulties:

- May learn at a slower pace that their peers even with appropriate individualized curriculum
- May be working below age related expectations
- May have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia (literacy difficulties), dyscalculia and dyspraxia.
- May have attention and concentration difficulties
- May have memory and processing difficulties
- May have difficulties retaining and recalling information
- May be unable to follow instructions and may need these broken down into small manageable chunks
- May have organisational and planning difficulties.
- May have poor writing, spelling, reading and comprehension skills.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH)

A child or young person may struggle to understand social situations. They may have difficulty forming and maintaining positive relationships and difficulty managing their own emotions, behaviour. They may struggle with significant levels of anxiety which can have a negative effect on their mental wellbeing over time.

Children who have SEMH difficulties may:

- Struggle with social interaction- initiating play, forming friendships
- Struggle with starting, maintaining and ending social conversations
- Struggle with social understanding-recognising social cues such as facial expressions, body language.
- Struggle with being able to initiate, participate in and understand the purpose of small talk in all social situations.
- Struggle with making and sustaining friendships
- Be vulnerable as they cannot pre-empt others intentions
- Struggle to recognise their own and others basic emotions – happy, sad, angry
- Struggle to understand more complex emotions such as frustrated, worried, anxious
- Struggle to link physical symptoms to an emotion- tummy ache, feeling sick, sweating
- Struggle to understand and respond to others emotions- lacks empathy
- Struggle to self-manage and regulate their own emotions (emotional dysregulation)
- Display symptoms of or have a diagnosed condition such as anxiety, OCD, depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Develop physical problems such as stomach/back pain, headache and other unexplained aches and pains
- Self-harm or have suicidal thoughts
- Have a low mood and low self esteem
- Have changes in sleep pattern, significant tiredness and low energy
- Have difficulty concentrating
- Show aggression or violence
- Have a change in appetite or unsafe control over-eating/drinking
- Have problems with alcohol or drugs
- Have excessive fears or worries
- Have intrusive thoughts
- Be unable to carry out day to day living tasks and routines
- Be isolated and withdrawn from friends and activities.

SENSORY AND PHYSICAL

A child or young person whose physical or neurological disability may prevent them from fully accessing their learning environment, their classroom or school. A neurological condition is any condition that affects the brain, spinal cord or nervous system. Other conditions can include a vision impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI).

Physical and sensory needs cover a wide range of medical conditions, including sensory processing disorder (SPD) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Children/Young people with sensory or physical conditions may need specialist support or equipment to help them in school or the workplace.

Children who have sensory and physical difficulties:

- May struggle with loud noises- dinner halls, corridors, assembly
- May dislike contact or physical touch- PE dance, break time, corridors, over and under responsive to touch
- May be over stimulated causing dysregulation
- May be sensitive to texture- clothing and food
- May be sensitive to smells and tastes
- May have a physical difficulty due to conditions such as hypermobility or cerebral palsy
- May have gross and fine motor skills difficulties - poor hand writing, struggles to catch a ball, zips, buttons

REASONABLE **ADJUSTMENTS**

Under the Equality Act 2010, educational settings have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure all children and young people, including those with SEND, can fully access their learning environment. In December 2012 the government issued non-statutory guidelines on how schools and other settings can comply with this legislation.

What counts as reasonable?

Many reasonable adjustments can be made by your child's school to support any of the 4 areas of need and may not require additional funding. Examples include:

- Planners, notes or visual timetables to help a child prepare for their school day
- Documents printed on different coloured paper and/or in a larger font
- Permitted breaks in teaching sessions, often called movement, emotional regulation or sensory breaks
- Electronic equipment for completing work and taking notes such as tablet or laptop
- Change in seating position o allow a child/YP to be near the front of the class, door, positive peers etc.
- Additional adult 1-1/ small group support or adult hover support
- Exam access arrangements such as extra time, rest breaks, reader/scribe, separate room

- Access to a safe space.

The term 'reasonable' is left to the discretion of the school or Local Authority to decide.

Reasonable adjustments may depend on:

- The financial resources of the school, and the cost of adjustment
- Health and safety requirements
- Provisions already made by the school
- The effect on other pupils
- The effectiveness of the adjustment

Under the Equality Act, educational settings also have a duty to provide reasonable 'auxiliary aids or services' for pupils who may otherwise be at a 'substantial disadvantage' due to their disability.

Pupils with physical difficulties which affect their access to learning

Schools must consider in advance potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally. This does not mean making adjustments for every possible disability, but to consider what is needed and plan appropriately for their students.

Schools are not subject to the reasonable adjustment duty to make alterations to physical features, such as ramps, or wider corridors. Any changes would be considered as part of their overall planning requirements.

Pupils with medical needs

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a statutory duty on governing bodies of maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units to support pupils with medical conditions. The mental and physical health of all children should be properly supported, to ensure they can fully participate in school life, and achieve their academic potential.

The Department for Education has issued statutory guidelines on supporting pupils with medical conditions. Schools must follow these guidelines, unless there is good reason not to. The guidance does not apply to maintained nursery schools, 16-19 academies and independent schools.

Ordinarily Available

The Ordinarily Available (OA) framework in Essex compliments the graduated approach. It outlines recommendations to define what support, resources and practices should be regularly available in educational settings, particularly for children with SEND. These should help settings focus on being inclusive. Mainstream schools should provide this support using their own funding and resources.

Levels of support
There are different levels of support for SEND in schools:

- Universal support.
- Targeted support

Universal Support

This is available to all children and young people and benefits all learners, but especially those with SEND.

Targeted Support

Targeted Support is for students who need more support beyond Universal Support.

It is additional support that will be discussed with the SENCO. The support will usually be documented and reviewed as part of One Planning.

Targeted Support can be provided in all mainstream schools in Essex. A student does not need an EHCP to receive targeted support.

If you think your child may need Targeted Support, you can discuss this with your child's school. Ask to speak to the SENCO about making a plan to support your child.

Specialist Support

Specialist Support is for children and young people with complex needs that can't be met through Universal or Targeted Support.

Specialist Support could include Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Educational Psychologist support.

The OA Framework does not cover Specialist Support.