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Education & Learning

This fact sheet has been produced to help you understand the right your child has to an education. The fact sheet also contains information about education after the age of 16.

Disabled children face barriers to education. They are more than twice as likely as non-disabled people to have no formal academic or vocational qualifications.

Education is much more than obtaining academic or vocational qualifications; it is also about giving children a sense of achievement, boosting their self-image and self-confidence. Every child should have the opportunity to take part in all activities at school and in their communities.

Disabled children and young people have rights in law to an inclusive education, under the Special Education Discrimination Act 2001 (SENDA).

What are Special Educational Needs?

Your child may be considered to have special educational needs if they have learning disabilities or a disability that makes it harder for them to learn and access education.

If your child has special educational needs, they may need extra help in a range of areas for example:

- Sensory or physical needs
- Organising themselves
- Schoolwork
- Reading
- Writing, working with numbers, or understanding information
- Expressing themselves or understanding what others say
- Making friends or relating to adults
- Behaving properly in school

If you feel that your child is experiencing difficulties you should see your child's teacher or the special needs co-ordinator or the head teacher, you may wish to ask them:

- If the school thinks your child is having difficulties
- Is your child able to work at the same level as children of a similar age
- Is your child already getting extra help

If the school feels your child does have special needs, they will adopt a step-by-step approach. Here are some basic points to bear in mind:

- If your child has special needs their needs should be met and they should receive a broad, well balanced and relevant education
- Your views, opinions and the wishes of your child should be taken into account
- Your child's needs will usually be met in a mainstream school sometimes with the help of outside specialists
- You should be consulted at all times about any decisions about your child

A school should tell you if they are giving your child extra help. The basic level of extra help is known as School Action, and could be:

- a different way of teaching certain things
- some extra help from an adult

- using particular equipment like a computer or special desk

Your child may need help for a short time, or for many years. Remember that you should be consulted at every step, and you should be told about your child's progress.

If your child does not seem to be making progress under the school action or school action plus schemes, your local authority may decide to carry out a more detailed assessment of your child's needs, based on specialist advice. The assessment aims to find out exactly what your child's needs are and what special help they need. Local authorities will normally tell you within six weeks whether they will carry out an assessment. They will also explain the assessment process. They will ask a specialist for advice, this could be:

- Your child's school
- An educational psychologist
- An occupational therapist
- A doctor
- Social services

You can attend any medical or interview or other tests during the assessment, you are also free to suggest the inclusion of any other party's view that you feel may be useful.

Once the Special Educational Needs (SEN) officers have completed their assessment, they decide whether to write down all the information they have collected and this is called a statement of educational needs, this should be done within 12 weeks of the beginning of the assessment.

A statement of special educational needs (SEN) sets out your child's needs and the help they should receive. It is reviewed annually to ensure that extra support is given to continue to meet your child's needs. If the local authority decides not to assess your child, they must write and tell you why. You also have the right to appeal to the special education needs tribunal if you disagree with their decision.

What does a statement of Special Educational Needs contain?

A statement of SEN is set out in six parts:

- part 1 gives general information about your child
- part 2 gives the description of your child's needs following the assessment
- part 3 describes all the special help to be given for your child's needs
- part 4 gives the type and name of the school your child should go to
- part 5 describes any non-educational needs your child has
- part 6 describes how your child will get help to meet any non-educational needs

A draft statement will be sent to you before your local authority writes a final statement. It will be complete except for part 4, which describes the type and name of school.

Choosing your First and Middle School

When choosing a first and middle school there are some things you should consider. You need to know the selection of schools in Harrow.

The Council produces a booklet to give you information about the first and middle school.

You can find out about each school from:

- The governors' annual report to parents
- The school prospectus or newsletter
- The school's website
- The school's policies on SEN, behaviour and bullying
- Talking to other parents
- Going to school events

Harrow Parent Partnership

Harrow Parent Partnership provides a service to parents who have a child with special needs. They give advice and support. You can contact them on: 020 8732 4780.

Address: Harrow Carers Building,
378 Pinner Road,
North Harrow,
HA2 6DZ
Telephone: 020 8861 5605

Preparing to visit the school

You can phone or write to arrange a visit.

Here are some things you may wish to consider:

- Do you want to take the child on the first visit?
- Do you want to take a friend or a member of your family? They might notice different things to you?
- Who do you want to meet? The special needs coordinator might be a good place to start
- Can your child use the playground?
- Is the school easy to get to from your home?
- Is the school accessible for your child's needs?
- Do you feel welcome?
- Do the children seem happy and interested?
- Is everybody helpful and friendly?

Some questions to ask

- How is the SEN support organised?
- How will the staff know about your child's needs?
- How will the school let you know about your child's progression?

Transport

Your Local Education Authority (LEA) should have a policy, which you can ask to see, on transport to school for children who have special educational needs. The policy should include details of how entitlement to transport is assessed and decided.

LEAs may provide free school transport for a child with a Statement of Educational Needs whose parents have not made suitable arrangements. Transport will only be provided if your child has needs, which make transportation necessary. If it is not considered necessary, the LEA will only provide free transport if your child is aged eight or over and lives more than three miles away from school, or if they are under eight and live more than two miles away from school.

LEAs will also usually pay towards travel costs for you to visit your child if they are placed in a residential school some distance from where you live. There may be a limit to the number of visits the LEA will pay for, and you may need to get a letter of support from a doctor, social worker or teacher.

Education choices at 16

Between the ages of 16-19 you can study at college or school. In Harrow most of the high schools now have a sixth form college attached to them.

If you have a statement of special educational needs and stay on at school, the LEA must provide the special education specified in your statement. However, if you continue your education at a college outside the control of the LEA, the college does not have to comply with your statement.

If you have particular support needs you should discuss these at an early stage with the school or college you are interested in attending, so that any necessary arrangements can be made.

You, or someone acting on your behalf, could negotiate with the college for the facilities you need if these are not available. It is unlawful for any school or provider of further education to discriminate against disabled students. For further information and more in-depth detail please look up Equality Act post 16 education. You may wish to approach a local councillor for support or obtain advice from a specialist organisation.

Going to University

Most universities have a disability unit or disability advisers that will be able to give you information at your chosen university. There is a very good book that can be downloaded from the internet called 'Bridging the Gap' this will tell you about the allowances you are able to receive while you are at university, 'Disabled Students Guide to University' by Emma Caprez is also another good book about this subject.

Disabled Students Allowance is for students who are going to study in Higher Education. Following an assessment, equipment can be provided to meet your needs whilst studying. This includes equipment and the cost of a non-medical helper.

Useful websites

Skill, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities provides advice and information for students in or about to embark on further or higher education.

Website: www.skill.org.uk

This fact sheet is one of a series, providing information and advice on a number of topics.

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HOUSING MATTERS:

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3	10 Rights of Private Tenants
4	Applying as Homelessness (Priority Need)
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6	The Right to Rent
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