

## The Statement of Special Educational Needs

**A definition:** A child is defined as having special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty which needs special teaching. A learning difficulty means that the child has significantly greater difficulty in learning than most children of the same age. Or, it means a child has a disability which needs different educational facilities from those that schools generally provide for children of the same age in the area. The children who need special educational education are not only those with obvious learning difficulties, such as those who are physically disabled, deaf or blind. They include those whose learning difficulties are less apparent, such as slow learners and emotionally vulnerable children. It is estimated that up to 20% of school children may need special educational help at some stage in their school careers. Source: (DfEE 1999 [<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen/sengloss.htm>])

A 'Statement of Educational Needs' (usually called a 'statement') is a document that sets out a child's needs and specifies the extra help they should get to meet these needs. To get a statement a child has to pass through a series of stages or levels. Some children do not need to progress through all the levels and stop when their needs have been addressed.

**Level 1** The school and/or parents raise concerns about the child and discuss them with the school's SEN coordinator (SENCO).

**Level 2** The school (usually the SENCO) assesses the child internally and draws up an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in consultation with the parents/carers. This puts in place strategies within the school to address the child's needs.

**Level 3** The school gets help from outside, usually from an Educational Psychologist. Another education plan is drawn up. If the child makes no further progress the head teacher asks for a 'Statutory Assessment'.

**Level 4** The LEA decides if the child needs an assessment. If it agrees it then makes one. The assessment is multidisciplinary and may include reports from teachers, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists other specialists and social services if the child is known to them. This may lead to a 'Statement'. If it doesn't the parents/carers get a 'Note in Lieu' and a copy of all the reports.

**Level 5** If a statement is issued the LEA must meet the provision set out within it. As a result the school is likely to get extra resources, which may be capital for equipment, or staff costs for extra help.