

Guidance Associated with Admissions to West Sussex Special Schools for Pupils with EHCPs

Introduction

This guidance aims to help families, schools, early years settings, colleges, voluntary sector organisations that support families and other professionals understand the provision made at West Sussex special schools and the range and level of needs that they meet. We encourage professionals to signpost families to this guidance.

Special schools in West Sussex are a key part of the services and provision for children and young people with SEND and play an important role in supporting delivery of [West Sussex SEND and Inclusion Strategy \(2019–2024\)](#).

The majority of children/young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will be able to attend their local mainstream school where they will receive the support they need to do well. The range and level/type of needs that can ordinarily be expected to be supported within a mainstream setting can be found in the [Ordinarily Available Inclusive Practice Guide](#).

Some schools develop their own internal provision to support the additional needs of children and young people. Schools include information on this type of provision in their SEND Information Report which can be found on their website.

Some children/young people will need an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to help make the provision they need and support them to achieve the outcomes we want them to achieve.

Sometimes a child/young person will continue to struggle and not make progress, even with carefully planned and personalised support. In these circumstances the best way of supporting them to achieve well may be through a placement at a more specialist provision. In West Sussex we have both Special Support Centres (attached to mainstream schools) and special schools to offer this more specialist provision.

This guidance is about our special schools, but we have also created similar guidance for our Special Support Centres.

Considering a Special School.

Sometimes the EHC plan may show that a child or young person has such high, complex or specialist needs that a special school might be a suitable option for placement. Suitability for specialist provision does not mean all other types of provision are unsuitable. The key to any placement for a pupil with an EHCP is that the setting can offer the prescribed provision and support to enable the pupil to meet their outcomes. The consideration of suitable provision might include what reasonable adjustments any type of setting can make to meet the pupil's needs.

When considering the suitability of a West Sussex special school for a child or young person with an EHCP the Local Authority will consider the principles set out in this document alongside the detail of each particular setting set out in their 'Provision Descriptor'. This consideration will also take into account the individual needs of the child/young person.

This guidance and the provision descriptors are to support families and professionals in understanding the process and provision available. **It does not, however, reflect specific criteria that must be met before admission.**

A child/young person may be appropriately placed in a special school; but that does not mean that other types of provision are not suitable. Parents/carers are still able to choose a mainstream setting if they wish to.

*'If a parent of a child, or young person, wants that child or young person to attend a mainstream setting, the LA can only refuse if a mainstream placement would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, **and** there are no reasonable steps the LA could take to avoid this' (section 33 Children and Families Act 2014).*

Many children/young people with SEND will have a range of needs, and all schools, including special schools, must make reasonable adjustments to meet the full range of needs of a child/young person in line with the Equality Act 2010.

West Sussex Special schools

Special schools offer a range of provision for children/young people with the most significant needs who require a specialist and personalised curriculum and approach to teaching and learning.

Children/young people placed in special schools typically have:

- a range of needs that significantly impact on their learning and development and/or their ability to access a mainstream curriculum and environment
- a combination of need that means that they require more specialist support than that which can ordinarily be met in a mainstream school or special support centre in a mainstream school.

Children/young people who attend special schools require provision that is:

- in addition to or different from what might be expected through quality first teaching and the range of differentiation and targeted intervention in a mainstream setting
- in addition to or different from that which would usually be provided in a mainstream setting through provision made as set out in an EHCP
- in addition to and different from other children/young people of a similar age.

Children/young people will normally only be admitted to a special school if they have an education, health and care needs plan (EHCP) or under EHC needs assessment, except for exceptional circumstances¹.

The EHC needs assessment is an important process which ensures a full understanding of a child/young person's needs, as well as the provision required to meet those needs. In most cases it will, therefore, be important for the full assessment to take place before consideration can be given to placing a child in a special school.

There are 12 maintained/academy special schools in West Sussex catering for children and young people with a range of needs.

If you are thinking about a special school placement, you are strongly encouraged to look at the provision descriptor for the setting (see links below) and also the school websites. Where possible it is advisable to arrange to visit the special school to see what they do.

This guidance does not cover independent or non-maintained special schools.

The Consideration and Admissions Process

The WSCC Special Educational Needs Assessment Team (SENAT) are responsible for coordinating admissions into West Sussex special schools.

Parent/carer's or the young person themselves can make a request for a particular nursery, school or post-16 institution, and WSCC **must** comply with that preference and name the school or college in the EHC plan unless:

- it would be unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or SEN of the child or young person, or
- the attendance of the child or young person there would be incompatible with the efficient education of others, or the efficient use of resources, e.g. needs could be able to be met in mainstream school

The Consultation

Where a parent/carer or young person makes a preference for a West Sussex maintained special school or academy the West Sussex SEN Assessment Team will always consult with that setting.

Alongside this consultation, SENAT will also consider the suitability of the preferred setting and, as a result, they may consult with other settings they consider may be appropriate.

¹ Example of an exceptional circumstance might be a child/young person with very complex needs moving into the country or a significant change in a pupil's presenting needs due to accident or illness.

SENAT will send the draft or Final EHCP and associated documents to the governing body, principal or proprietor of the school or college. If the school/setting is in another local authority area, that Local Authority **must** be consulted too.

The school/setting has 15 days to respond, and their views will be considered carefully before deciding whether to name it in the child or young person's EHC plan. The setting must consider the child/young person's needs and required provision in their response to the consultation. They must take into account the SEND Code of Practice when providing their response.

This may include schools considering:

- Whether they can meet the child/young person's needs and make suitable provision as described in the EHCP. This should include considering what reasonable adjustments could be made to meet their needs
- Whether they can offer a meaningful peer group of children/young people of a similar age, and with similar developmental, verbal, social and academic levels
- Whether they can physically accommodate the child/young person in the school, having considered reasonable adjustments to create appropriate space.

SENAT will consider all responses received and make the final decision on placement. As this process may be different depending on the current situation for the child/young person the SEN Assessment Team will keep individual families informed regarding progress.

During times of consideration of a large number of preferences for a particular setting SENAT and the setting may arrange specific consideration processes, i.e., a Consideration Meeting, to look at the full range of pupil's potentially seeking a placement. This ensures a fair consideration process based on need during these busier times, for example when considering admissions into Year 7. Again, the SEN Assessment Team will keep families informed.

Although the majority of admissions take place at the beginning of an academic year, admissions into special schools can take place across the school year.