

St Michael Steiner School

Early years special education needs policy and procedure

Policy

The kindergarten considers all children to be special and that every child has individual needs. The kindergarten admits children with special educational needs whenever this is possible given the nature of the environment and the make-up of the whole group.

The Steiner Early Childhood curriculum is holistic and focuses on the child as an individual and we aim for all children to achieve their full potential. Every endeavour will be taken to accommodate the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs of each child. For many children the kindergarten will provide their first experience of learning within a group. The kindergarten provides opportunities for children to develop in the three prime areas and four specific areas as specified in the Early Years Foundation Stage (see our Curriculum policy for details of our exemptions).

We offer differentiated learning opportunities to help each individual child develop at their own natural pace, and offer a flexible response to the needs of individual children. We take into account learning English as a second or third language (obviously an advantage, not a learning difficulty), as well as those who may have particular learning difficulties.

Our staff observe all children in appropriate ways, and through play based and other activities, aim to get to know the children well. It is not assumed that all children will progress at the same rate. Written assessments are provided for parents in the final term of the EYFS (the summer term during the year the child turns five) and the following year when children leave kindergarten. In addition to this, each child is observed and progress noted and reviewed throughout their time in the early years.

The Kindergarten aims to have regard for the DfE & DfH Special educational needs and disability code of practice (July 2014). The kindergarten also has regard for the Equality Act 2010, in particular, to not discriminate against, harass or victimise disabled children, and to make reasonable adjustments to prevent those children being put at substantial disadvantage.

A child is identified as having a special educational need if he or she, despite appropriate early childhood experiences:

- makes little or no progress
- works at levels significantly below those expected for a child of similar age
- presents persistent social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties
- has sensory or physical needs
- has communication and/or interaction difficulties

Where extra provision is required for a child, staff and the SENCO (the Special Educational Needs Coordinator) work closely with parents to establish the support the child needs. Some children's needs only become apparent as they grow and develop, and attentive observation of children enables difficulties to be spotted early.

It is acknowledged that parents know their children best and therefore it is important that staff listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child's

development. A code of confidentiality is followed. Staff also listen to and address any concerns raised by children themselves.

Our Kindergarten has appointed Katie Sharrock, as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) for the Early Years. Katie works in partnership with Leigha Hipkin and, when necessary, in consultation with the lower school SENCO, Pat Alexander.

The early years SENCO is responsible for:

- the day to day operation of the SEN policy in conjunction with Kindergarten teachers
- co-ordinating provision for children with SEN in conjunction with Kindergarten teachers.
- attending relevant statutory and non-statutory training on a regular basis and sharing this knowledge with the other members of the early years team.
- updating the School SENCO on any matters of concern
- ensure parents are closely involved and that their knowledge informs action taken by the setting
- ensure all practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEN
- advise and support colleagues
- liaise with professionals or agencies outside the setting

When a child has been identified as needing SEN support, in addition to in-school support, the SENCO may call upon additional support including the school doctor, Dr Jenny Josephson, the Steiner Waldorf Early Years Group (SWEYG) Advisory Team, the Hounslow LA Area SENCO, and when necessary, outside agencies including education psychologists, health therapists, speech and language therapists and so on. Parents are involved at all stages.

Procedure

The Kindergarten has regard to the DfE Special educational needs and disability code of practice (2014), and offers a graduated response with four stages of action: assess, plan, do and review.

1. Assess The early years practitioners and SENCO will initially assess the needs of the child, in consultation with parents as follows:

- A child study may be done for the child.
- Parent and staff meet to discuss the child, including biographical information
- the SENCO takes responsibility for gathering information from staff meetings, parents, College, and the lower school SENCO
- a clear picture should be gathered about the child and their needs and difficulties
- Following the initial assessment on subsequent cycles, if there is little or no progress, more specialist assessment may be called from outside the school's setting. Where professionals are not already working with the setting, the SENCO will make contacts, with parents' agreement.

2. Plan Where it is decided to offer SEN support, and with agreement of parents, the staff and SENCO will decide how best to support the child. The kindergarten has regard for the understanding of child development as established by Rudolf Steiner, in particular that children do not progress in an linear manner but may develop in areas other than those being specifically considered. Children may seem to make no progress for some time, and then make a leap ahead unexpectedly, or in an area of development not being considered. They will consider the following points:

- what would we like the child to be able to do
- how can we support the child to achieve this?
- how will this affect the child
- depending on the age of the child, the child's views may be sought
- are there any training needs for staff ? (eg Makaton)
- how parents can support
- date for review (usually termly but in urgent cases, more frequently)

3. Do The SENCO or the child's key person will be responsible for working with the child on a daily basis, with support from the SENCO. Staff will discuss together how things progress and records kept, available for parents to view.

4. Review At the appropriate time, the effectiveness of the SEN support will be reviewed and a plan made, together with parents, for next steps.

Involving specialists

Where necessary, staff will consider involving specialists such as the Area SENCO (local authority), speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, Portage workers, or health visitors etc. Such involvement is discussed with the child's parents and coordinated by the SENCO.

Requesting an Education, Health and Care needs assessment

Where a child's development continues to cause concern, or where it is clear an EHC assessment is essential for the child, a request may be made for an Education, Health and Care needs assessment, as detailed in the SEN code of practice (2014) Chapter 9. If a child has an EHC plan, this will be reviewed annually, although for children under five, the plan may be reviewed between three and six months.

Additional staff may be appointed so that the child's particular needs within the kindergarten setting may be met. This may mean working in a one-on-one situation, with a particular child included in a small group, or the whole group setting at different times. This would be done subject to necessary funding being made available through the EHC assessment or through parental contribution. Even when an EHCP is granted, it does not always provide financial support.

Moving on

Staff will discuss with parents regarding the possible transition to Class 1 when their SEN supported child reaches the appropriate age, and always when the child draws near to the end of the EYFS (age five). It is not always possible to make this transition and in this situation, the kindergarten staff will support the child and parents in transition to their next setting.

