

The St Michael Steiner School Early Years Early Years Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Policy and Procedure

1. Policy statement

The kindergarten considers all children to be unique, capable and full of potential. Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and 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 a unique individual. The curriculum has an inclusive practice and aims to remove barriers to learning, 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 EYFS policy for details of our exemptions), and through the Steiner Waldorf early childhood curriculum (see our Early Years Curriculum policy).

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 at the end of the first year of kindergarten, 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 has an obligation to follow the DfE and DfH *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 Years* (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. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or a disability will not be treated less favourably than other children. Early identification of special educational needs will ensure an early response to the individual needs of the child.

2. Definition of Special Education Needs (SEN) - Identifying SEN

A child may be identified as having a special educational need if they, despite appropriate early childhood experiences:

- make little or no overall progress
- have communication and/or interaction difficulties [COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION]
- work at levels significantly below those expected for a child of similar age [COGNITION AND LEARNING]
- present persistent social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties [SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH]
- have sensory or physical needs [SENSORY AND/OR PHYSICAL NEEDS]

Children are not to be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they are taught. We consider that being or becoming bi/trilingual is a definite advantage in life.

Individual children may have needs that cut across these four areas and their needs may change over time.

When a child appears to be behind expected levels, or when a child's progress and behaviour gives cause for concern, the kindergarten teachers, together with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo,) will consider all information about the child's learning and development gathered in their observations, information collected from the SENCo's observations, and any assessment that may have taken place outside of the setting. A delay in learning and development may or may not indicate that a child has SEN. Likewise, difficult or withdrawn behaviour does not necessarily mean that a child has SEN. However, if the teacher has a concern over the child's learning and development, there should be an assessment to determine the cause of the development or learning delay.

Children who have been identified as having special educational needs may require *special educational provision* to be made for them. Special educational provision involves educational provision that is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age. Special education provision will be matched to the child's identified SEN.

Once a child has been identified as having SEN, the teachers will work in partnership with parents to establish the support the child needs. 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.

3. Admission of children to the kindergarten with known or suspected SEN

For admission to the kindergarten, in addition to the initial meeting, the parents of a child with known or suspected SEN are required to provide information about the child's needs (including reports from previous childcare practitioners and/or other specialists.) A second meeting may be requested to assess the levels of difficulties the child is experiencing and whether the kindergarten can adequately meet the child's needs.

4. SEN support in the kindergarten

The kindergarten staff, together with the SENCo, aim for an early identification of SEN and intervention.

A trigger for kindergarten action could be:

- A parent's concern about a child's behaviour, attention or learning abilities
- A teacher's concern about a child's behaviour, attention or learning abilities
- The school's therapists concern about a child's behaviour, attention or learning abilities
- The result of a class observation

Where extra provision is required for a child, staff and the SENCo 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 and identified early.

The kindergarten offers a graduated response with four stages of action: assess, plan, do and review.

a) 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.

b) Plan

Where it is decided to offer SEND support, and with the 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 a 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? (e.g., Makaton)
- How parents can support.
- Date for review (usually termly but can be more frequently).

Once a child has been identified as needing special educational provision, the teacher, together with the SENCo and the child's parents, should work together and agree on a set of targets with desired outcomes, the strategies that will be put in place in the setting and at home, and a stated date for review. This information will be put into an **SEN Individual Support Plan**, signed by the parents and the SENCo, copies of which will be given to the parents, filed in the child's file, and in the SEN folder. The targets must be specific and realistic, and identified in relation to the expected outcomes. The kindergarten teachers are responsible for sharing the support plans with their assistants, as they will need to adopt the strategies identified to meet the targets.

c) Do

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. The SENCo should support the teachers and assistants in assessing the child's response to the strategies taken, in problem solving, and advising on the effective implementation of the support.

The parents have a responsibility to reinforce the provision or contribute to its progress at home. Strategies that they can adopt at home will be identified together with the parents and included in the support plan if appropriate.

d) Review

At the appropriate time, the effectiveness of the SEND support will be reviewed and a plan made, together with parents, for next steps. At the review, three scenarios (Waves) are possible:

Wave 1: the child has successfully met all the targets in the support plan. The teacher and the SENCo may then decide whether another plan needs to be put in place with different targets, or whether the kindergarten rhythm and routine are sufficient to meet the child's individual needs.

Wave 2: some of the targets in the plan have been successfully met, while others are emerging. In this case, a new plan can be written focusing on the emerging targets. In this situation, it is possible that the involvement of a specialist teacher (e.g., eurythmy therapist) is required.

Wave 3: none of the strategies set in the plan have been successful in meeting the targets. In this case, there is a need for a revision of the targets and strategies. It is also possible that the involvement of other professionals is required, as well as the involvement of external agencies.

When the teacher has a serious concern about a child's development, they might discuss with the child's parents the involvement of external agencies. Parents are responsible for implementing the recommendation to involve an outside agency. A rare exception to this would be if the school considered the child to be at risk. The SENCo will liaise with agencies where appropriate. It is also the parents' responsibility to inform the teacher and the SENCo of any assessments and reports that have been produced by external agencies. Following recommendations from outside agencies, the school would need to consider if they could be carried out in the context of the Educational Philosophy of the school and current resourcing levels.

October 2024 / Next review: 2025

In Wave 3, the kindergarten teachers and the SENCo may seek advice from one or more of the following:

- School therapists
- GP or paediatrician
- Steiner Waldorf Early Years Group (SWEYG) Advisory Team
- Hounslow LA Area SENCO
- LEA (e.g., in the case of a school or parental referral/request for statutory assessment)
- Educational Psychologist
- Child Psychologist
- Child Psychiatrist
- Social Services
- External Special Needs expert or therapist (e.g., speech and language)
- Other

Such involvement is discussed with the child's parents and coordinated by the SENCo.

The SENCO and the kindergarten teacher will take note in the child's personal file of the advice that has been sought and the support that has been provided in the meantime. When the additional advice has been received, a new support plan can be drawn up to reflect the recommendations. The support plan should continue to be implemented, and, when appropriate, the external agencies should be involved with the review process.

5. Documentation

Once an individual support plan has been agreed by the teacher, the SENCo and the parents, it will be signed by the parent(s) and the SENCo. A signed copy will be given to the parents, and other copies will be filed in the SEN folder and the child's individual file. The review of a support plan will also be filed in the SEN folder and the child's file, as well as, any external assessment or report. All information relevant to a child with an Education and Health Care plan will be filed in the child's file (this information include individual plans, annual reviews, and correspondence).

6. The role and responsibilities of the SENCO

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) for the school is Lisa Harrison, who works in partnership with the kindergarten teachers, and when necessary with the trustee responsible for SEN.

The early years SENCo is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the SEN policy including:

- the day-to-day operation of the SEND policy in conjunction with kindergarten teachers
- co-ordinating provision for children with SEND in conjunction with kindergarten teachers
- attending relevant statutory and non-statutory training when needed 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 SEND and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEND
- advise and support colleagues
- liaise with professionals or agencies outside the setting
- coordinating liaison between external agencies and the teaching staff
- involvement in coordination and liaison between kindergarten and school, where the child concerned is currently in kindergarten and the parents wish the child to progress through to the school
- liaising with internal specialists (eurythmy therapist)
- keeping up to date with SEN legislation and practice

7. 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 SEND 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.

8. Transition to Class 1

Staff will discuss with parents regarding the possible transition to Class 1 when their SEND-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 the transition to their next setting.