

Special Needs Policy

Aim

At Sidcup Baptist Church Playgroup we believe that every child should have the best possible learning opportunities.

We recognise that some children may have particular needs or disabilities and we take specific action to support and encourage these children within a caring environment.

We enable all children to participate fully in learning activities and experiences by providing a curriculum that responds to the individual development of each child.

We work closely with parents and other agencies to monitor the child's progress carefully, and provide effective, additional support to meet the child's needs.

Implementation of the policy in Sidcup Baptist Church Playgroup

It is the responsibility of the management committee to:

- Produce a Special Needs Policy for the playgroup and make it available to all parents. This provides information on how children with special needs and disabilities are supported within the playgroup.
- Ensure that all staff, including students and volunteers, are aware of the details of the policy.
- Be aware of 'special needs' and 'disabilities' in the context of Early Years provision and understand how statutory, national and local procedures apply in practice to children under 5.
- Ensure that the work of the playgroup has 'due regard' to the SEND Code of Practice.
- Identify the necessary provision and staff arrangements to meet the special needs of the children.
- Appoint one member of staff to be Special Needs Co-ordinator.
- The playgroup SENCo is Rebecca Birkbeck. This person is responsible for supporting children with special needs within the playgroup and will be:
 - Familiar with the Code of Practice.
 - Aware of national developments/ government initiatives.
 - Able to support other staff.
 - Capable of making links with parents and other agencies.
- Ensure that no child is refused a place at the playgroup because of any special needs they may have.
- Set high, but achievable, targets for children with special needs with staff, parents and children.
- Liaise with organisations and agencies who are concerned with children's special needs and disabilities.
- Ensure that staff have opportunities to undertake specialist training related to special needs, to improve and update their knowledge and understanding.

- Make effective use of any available LEA funding and resources to meet the identified needs of children in the playgroup.

Following the SEND Code of Practice:

To pay 'due regard' to the Code of Practice, staff working with children with special needs focus on the following:

- early identification
- effective intervention
- inclusive education
- physical environment
- partnership with parents
- multi-agency collaboration

Early identification and intervention:

- We make regular observations and assessments of all children's play and progress to enable early identification of children's special needs, working closely with parents and our Early Years Area SENCo.
- We monitor the progress of children with identified special needs carefully so that we can plan appropriate provision and support for these children.
- We share all reports on children's progress with parents.
- We use a graduated approach to identify and meet children's special needs. This is in line with national and local procedures and involves a systematic cycle of assessment, planning, action and review, recording clear targets and strategies for development and progress.
- We use a range of strategies, as well as verbal communication, to involve the children in setting and reviewing targets. Children are encouraged to make choices and share their feelings and wishes with staff.

Inclusion:

- We ensure that children with special needs are, where practicable, fully integrated into the daily groupings of the children and their routines.
- In order to make appropriate and effective provision or adaptations, we collect information from parents to find out the children's:
 - visual/hearing needs
 - physical needs
 - emotional needs
 - learning needs
 - self-help needs
 - communication needs.
- We ensure that children with special needs and disabilities are involved in play activities alongside the other children wherever possible.
- We encourage and support children with special needs and disabilities to play confidently with other children and make a positive contribution.
- We develop activities and experiences to raise the other children's awareness of positive images of disability and difference.

- We make flexible arrangements for additional adult support to enhance social interaction, avoiding segregating children from playing with their peers.
- We plan open-ended learning activities and experiences to help all the children to participate and learn, differentiating through equipment used and targets set.
- We use a range of strategies to engage the children in play, and provide learning activities to suit individual children's most effective style of learning.

Physical environment:

- We make reasonable adaptations and arrangements so that children with special needs and disabilities can safely join in all play areas of the playgroup, both indoors and outdoors.
- We make every effort to organise appropriate space for the children's supported and independent movement.
- We ensure that children with special needs have easy access to toilet and eating facilities.
- We arrange respectful privacy for children with special needs at times of specific medical care or welfare.

Partnership with parents:

- We encourage parents to work closely with staff to support their children's individual needs.
- We make time to focus on discussion of the children's strengths, as well as their needs.
- We check that parents understand the graduated procedures of intervention.
- We respect the different perspectives and needs of parents.
- The Special Needs Co-ordinator and other staff ensure that there is consistent communication and consultation with parents.
- We consult with parents about information that should be shared with others.

Multi-agency collaboration:

- The Special Needs Co-ordinator liaises with other supportive agencies to develop good working relationships.
- We gather information on relevant contacts and services to share with parents.
- We aim to achieve a good relationship for information-sharing, collaboration and understanding with other professionals in order to take into account the complete needs of the child.

Arrangements for times of Pandemic

- In addition to the above, during times of closure (or partial closure) due to pandemic measures, contact will be maintained with families who have a child on the SEND register via regular phone calls.
- Information such as referral forms which need to be shared with parents and other agencies will be sent securely, using an Egress account.

The Graduated Approach:

SEN Support (Assess, Plan, Do, Review, Transition)

- The SENCo, keyperson and parents will discuss any concerns and identify approaches that may be beneficial for the child.
- With parental permission, information will be shared between settings, the area SENCo and if necessary when referring a child to an outside agency e.g the Speech and Language Therapy team, or the Educational Psychology service.
- Favourite activities and the child's strengths will be noted and written down; this information will be used to set targets in an Individual Learning and Development Plan known as an Individual Education Plan- IEP.
- The IEP will target any concerns and build on the child's strengths.
- Where considered appropriate, the SENCo will seek advice and support from outside agencies, e.g. speech/language therapists or health professionals.
- The SENCo will work with other professionals to write IEPs and take advice on how best to meet the child's needs.
- Items of equipment may be needed to help the child participate, e.g. supporting chair, special cup or food bowl, standing frame.
- Staff may also need to use additional means of communication, gesture, Makaton, British Sign Language, PECS.
- The child may need an extra adult helper/one-to-one worker to facilitate their play and learning. Extra staff will be employed if necessary.
- All these resources will be noted on the child's IEP.
- The SENCo and parents will review the IEP at least once a term unless the need arises to implement change sooner.
- SEN support will include planning and preparation for transition, before the child moves onto another setting or school.

Education, Health and Care (EHC) Assessment and Plan

“Where, despite the setting having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the special educational needs of the child, the child has not made expected progress, the setting should consider requesting an Education, Health and Care needs assessment.” (Code of Practice, Section 5.49)

- At this point, the playgroup will support the parents in requesting that the education authority becomes directly involved in making an assessment of a child's needs.

If the local authority considers an EHC Needs Assessment is necessary:

- Parents and playgroup staff will be invited to submit evidence of the child's strengths and needs, including action already undertaken and progress made.
- Any reports made by other professionals will also be obtained including clinicians and other health professionals.
- The LEA will use the information from the assessment to decide whether it is necessary for it to make provision in accordance with an EHC plan.

References and Regulations

Reference to the Early Years Foundation Stage safeguarding and welfare requirements and the SEND Code of Practice

Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development.

Practitioners must consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability which requires specialist support.

They should link with, and help families to access, relevant services from other agencies as appropriate.

For children whose home language is not English, providers must take reasonable steps to provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning.

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.

The premises and equipment must be organised in a way that meets the needs of children

Providers must ensure there is an area where staff may talk to parents and /or carers confidentially.

Providers are required to have arrangements in place to identify and support children with SEN or disabilities and to promote equality of opportunity for children in their care.

Providers must make available information to parents on how the setting supports children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Early years providers should regularly review and evaluate the quality and breadth of the support they offer or can access for children with SEN or disabilities.

Providers should work in partnership with other local education providers to explore how different types of need can be met most effectively.

References

DfE & DoH (2014) *Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years*
Department for Education: Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2017)