

Policy for Special Educational Needs and Disability at St Thomas' Playgroup

This policy is in line with the Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice 2014 (SEND Code 2015)

This policy is about our approach to the inclusion of:

- Children with special educational needs
- Children with disabilities
- Children with medical needs
- Children with any other need which could affect their access to the curriculum, their development and progress, or their enjoyment.

This policy describes the way we meet the need of children who experience barriers to their learning, which may relate to sensory or physical impairment, learning difficulties or emotional or social development. They may also encounter difficulties relating to their environment, including the learning environment they experience at St Thomas' playgroup.

Please see Glossary for explanation of abbreviations (SEN, SEND, SENCO, EHCP, IEP)

Our Approach

Aims and objectives of the policy:

- To ensure that the SEN code of Practice (2014) and the Equalities Act (2010) are implemented effectively across the playgroup. To ensure equality of opportunity and to eliminate discrimination against children with SEN and disabilities. Please see our equality objectives.
- To see the 'whole child', not just the need. We want all children to be valued just as they are, and we recognise that every child makes a special and unique contribution to life at St Thomas' playgroup.
- To ensure children with SEN and/ or disabilities are viewed in a positive way by all members of the school community and that inclusive provision is positively valued by staff, parents and carers.

- To have high aspirations for children with SEND to achieve their full potential
- To enable each child to enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum at St Thomas' Playgroup through differentiated planning. To offer all children opportunities for rich first-hand experiences, for making choices, and for play.
- To involve parents and carers at every stage in plans to meet their child's additional needs. To provide flexible support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families on roll in the playgroup and in the local community.
- To consult with and involve children in planning for their education as far as is appropriate given their age and stage of development. We aim to always consider children's interests and preferences and offer them choices.
- To help all children to learn about diversity, special needs and disabilities, in a positive and supportive atmosphere.
- To support staff in learning about the different needs and disabilities of children on roll, and being confident and able to engage with all children.
- To have systems to review the effectiveness of our work from the perspectives of a range of people, including parents and professionals leading to changes and improvements.

We do not treat all children in the same way. We will respond to each child in ways which take account of her or his special needs and varied life experiences.

We recognise that children learn at different rates and that there are many factors affecting achievement, including ability, emotional state, age and development. Many pupils, at some time in their school career, may experience difficulties which affect their learning, and we recognise that these may be long or short term.

At St Thomas' Playgroup, we aim to identify these needs as soon as they arise and provide teaching and learning contexts which enable every child to achieve to his or her full potential. However we are aware that many difficulties are resolved through the maturation process and that children develop at different rates resulting in some children only needing extra support for a limited period.

We recognise that every year, in the cohort of children starting at St Thomas' Playgroup there is the possibility of children who have:

- Speech and language delay
- Challenging behaviour
- Difficulties in focusing attention
- Delayed physical development
- Developmental co-ordination disorders

Our main response to this is through working positively with children and families, building on their strengths, resilience and deep understanding of their child. The close partnership with parents, the high quality of care offered to the children through our key person system, and the careful control of the playgroup environment (indoors and out) help many children to settle and thrive in the playgroup.

Additional Funding to support children with SEND

We are able to bid each term for some additional funding to support children with SEN . This is used to offer extra support to children with IEPs to work on an identified area of difficulty through some one-to-one adult support or in a small specialist group.

Monitoring Provision

Monitoring is carried out by the Area SENCO who reviews the work supporting individual children. Professional support and feedback is sought via work with the Educational Psychologist, and close partnership with the Child Development Team.

The SEND Co-ordinator or 'SENCO' is Lynda Patching.

Staff Training in SEND

The Playgroup leader and SENCO are responsible for co-ordinating training for staff that supports their work with children with SEND. Training is offered in a range of ways as follows;

- The SENCO offers guidance and support to staff directly via discussion and joint observation of children
- Staff learn new information and strategies through professional discussions at IEP review meetings
- Professionals who support children with SEND may visit the playgroup and offer advice individually to practitioners or to groups of staff via staff meetings or training.

- The SENCO attends termly cluster meetings, giving advice and guidance to SENCO's.
- Staff may attend CPD courses offered by the local authority
- Staff may attend accredited courses
- Staff may visit and learn from other early years settings

Arrangements for coordinating SEN provision

In line with the SEND Code of Practice 2014 (SEND Code 2015), we offer a 'graduated' response to teaching and learning for children with SEND. The graduated response includes a cycle of assessment, plan, do and review and for children with special needs the response becomes increasingly individualised as we build up a detailed picture of the child's strengths and difficulties.

The SENCO has responsibility for overseeing and leading the process of 'Assess, plan, do, review' and for ensuring that communication with children, families and outside agencies is as smooth as possible.

Stage 1 Identification of a special educational need or disability.

Identification of a child's special need or disability happens in a range of ways;

- Some children enter the setting with information and possibly previous assessment of their SEND. The child and family may already have a professional team working with them such as the 'Child Development Team'. In these cases some preparatory work can be done before the child starts in the nursery to ensure they have a positive and safe start. This is particularly true for children with identified medical needs when a Health Care Plan (see glossary) is created before the child is left in the setting without his or her parents.
- time during a child's time in the playgroup.
- Playgroup staff or other professionals may raise a concern about a child's development, either through observation and interaction with the child, via the assessment system when tracking a child's progress or via information shared with them by the child's family. Staff are encouraged to share any concerns immediately with the SENCO.
- We use the Early Years Foundation Stage developmental outcomes or 'progress matters' to help us assess if a child's progress is within the expected range of development in a particular area or if it is behind or ahead.
- We also offer the Early Years Foundation Stage 'Two Year Progress Check' for all children on roll in the nursery between their second and third

movement and we are currently piloting the new 'Integrated Two Year Check' with health professionals. The two year checks offer us a standardised way to assess children's progress against expected levels.

Initial response to a concern or identified need

- The SENCO will initially explore any concerns raised or identified needs via discussion with staff or examining any additional information such as reports from outside agencies. If the concern has been brought from a staff member the SENCO may ask them to seek further information either via observation of the child or discussion with the child's parents. The SENCO will also observe children to clarify concerns or gather information.
- As soon as a concern is clearly raised or identified the SENCO will lead the process to fully discuss the child's needs with their parents. From this discussion several courses of action or a combination of courses are possible.

Response to an identified special need or disability

Via discussion with the child's parents, the Key Person, SENCO and any other professionals already supporting the family we respond in a range of ways, including a combination of ways. The SENCO leads other staff in this process. We offer different levels of support depending on the child's level of need. All levels of support in the playgroup are termed 'SEN support'. We always consider how to work in partnership with outside agencies. We may plan;

- To make an individual education plan (or IEP) for a child focusing on the areas that have been identified. This might include increased access to an aspect of provision such as Developmental Movement Play (DMP) or small language groups. See below for further detail on how we write IEPs.
- To make a health care plan for a child with the input of at least one health professional with knowledge or access to knowledge of the child's medical needs.
- To refer the child for further support to a professional agency, for example Speech and Language Therapy Service or Child and adult mental health service. We may also seek advice or support from a

specialist service to inform our planning, for example the Area SENCO with responsibility for visual impairment.

At any point in a child's time in the playgroup their plans could be reviewed and we may choose to respond differently or to increase, decrease or end our level of extra support for a child. The key to planning is that it is flexible and responsive to new information or changes in the child or the child's family circumstance.

Monitoring plans made for children

- Targets set for children's learning and development at their termly review with their parents are reviewed at the next meeting and monitored via the assessment policy in 'profile books' and via observation and tracking against the developmental outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. Parents or staff may arrange more frequent meetings if they feel that is appropriate.
- Health Care Plans are routinely reviewed at termly review meetings or in the light of any new information regarding a child's health or medication. They may also be reviewed at a multi-agency IEP review meeting.
- IEPs are either reviewed at the child's termly review or, if outside agencies are involved, on an IEP review day held approximately six times a year. On IEP review days the Educational Psychologist facilitates the reviews with the SENCO.

Ending intervention to support an SEN or disability

Some children will need extra support, but it is important to remember that, either in response to the intervention, or their access to playgroup provision or simply through maturation and the support of their family that children may not need to continue to have additional support throughout their time at the nursery. When this happens, in full consultation with the child's family we discontinue additional support.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

An IEP includes several (usually 2-4) short term targets and the strategies to help children reach those targets to enable progress. It always includes the arrangement to review the plan. The targets are clear, measureable in some way and designed to be achievable by the following review. IEPs should include anything that is additional or different to the general provision offered to all children. However sometimes it is appropriate to include how a practitioner will offer extra support to allow a child increased access to an area of standard provision.

The IEPs also contain a brief record of any other issues discussed with the family and/or professionals that might impact on the child's development.

Following or during an IEP review the SENCO will record changes on the plan and forward copies to the child's parents and other professionals supporting the child, with parental permission.

Request for statutory assessment and Education Health Care Plans

For a child who is not making adequate progress, despite a period of SEN support, and in agreement with the parents/carers/carers, we may request the Local Authority to make a statutory assessment in order to determine whether it is necessary for the child to have an **Education Health Care Plan**. Children have Education Health Care Plans when their needs cannot be met through the 'local offer' of provision for children with SEND. All children who are transferring to a special school are likely to have an Education Health Care Plan and some children with exceptional needs in mainstream schools may also have one.

When an application is made there are different possible outcomes; the child's needs don't meet the threshold for an EHCP and continues with SEN Support; the child is given a revised co-ordinated SEN Support plan, or an assessment for an EHCP is granted.

If an assessment is granted then the SENCO and local authority will co-ordinate the schools and the parent's contribution to the assessment process and facilitate other professionals to gather information about the child in the setting. It is important that this is done in a timely way, particularly if a child will be making the transition to primary school. Parents are fully involved in all stages of the assessment process and the local authority will allocate a key worker from the SEN team to support families through the process. Planning, provision, monitoring and review processes continue as before while awaiting the outcome of the request.

Education Health Care Plans

Education Health Care Plans are reviewed at least annually to consider the appropriateness of the provision and to recommend to the LA whether any changes need to be made, either to the EHCP or to the funding arrangements for the child.

Some children are awarded an EHCP just before their entry to primary school. In this case the SENCO will liaise with the receiving school using the EHCP as material for the discussion in planning for the child's needs in the new setting.

Transition to Primary School (or another Early Years setting)

All children are sensitive to change and change may induce a child to regress or falter in their development. Children with difficulties in processing information, with mobility issues or any form of SEN are likely to find the transition to primary school or any new setting even more challenging than normally developing children. Families of children with SEN may also find the choices they need to make are more complex than those facing other families.

We make plans to offer extra support to all children with SEN or a disability when they are about to transfer to a new setting. These usually include a visit to the new setting with their Key person as well as a parent and use of photos of the new setting or new significant people to help the child think about the change.

We support parents by offering a meeting with the educational psychologist in the Autumn term specifically for parents of children with SEND around choosing schools. We also plan carefully with parents and hold a 'transition meeting' before a child is due to transfer with staff from the new setting and any other relevant professionals to ensure there is a smooth and supported flow of information. This offers a chance for the new setting to plan and allows families to communicate their knowledge, hopes and any concerns to new staff with the support of professionals that they know well.

Glossary

Equalities Act 2010

This act includes a duty on all schools to publish information each year about their plans to tackle discrimination, particularly towards with protected characteristics. Protected characteristics include having a disability.

Health Care Plan

If a child suffers from a medical condition that might endanger his or her life or cause severe illness or is subject to a programme of medication then they are required to have a Health Care Plan before they are left in the care of nursery staff. This plan must be completed by or checked by a health care professional who knows the child's needs well or has access to that information. The child's parents also fully

participate in writing the plan and sign it, along with the head teacher. Examples of children who might require a health care plan are a child with a severe allergy that could engender anaphylactic shock or a child who suffers seizures or has regular medication to control an on-going and serious condition.

SEN and SEND

These terms refer to 'special educational needs' and 'special educational needs and/or disability'.

SENCO

This stands for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. The role of the SENCO is outlined clearly in the Code of Practice 2014. The SENCO is charged with liaising with outside professionals, staff and families, co-ordinating and facilitating the support for children with SEND, arranging training for staff and generally ensuring that the code of practice is fully adhered to.

Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)

If a child has severe and complex SEND and their needs cannot be met by the local offer then they may be assessed as needing an Education Health Care Plan. The assessment is carried out in a co-ordinated way by professionals from health, education and other agencies as appropriate. The child's family and, as far as possible the child themselves must be fully involved in creating the plan. The plan sets out the child's needs, outcomes sought for the child, the special provision required and the child's interests and aspirations. It will also include the name of the school the child is/will attend.

Personal Budgets

Families of children with severe and complex SEND who have EHCP can request a personal budget. The budget is a clear amount of money that must be spent on supporting the child to reach their agreed outcomes. A personal budget can provide a family or a young person with more choice, flexibility and control. There are a number of ways that a personal budget can be managed.

Reviewed by staff team March 2015 .

Signed Chair person

Next review due March 2016