

Children who have learning support needs often have an identified special educational need.

The 1981 Education Act states that 'A child who has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty which may be the result of a 'physical or sensory disability, an emotional or behavioural problem or developmental delay'. (1981 Education Act, Section 1)

A child with such needs is placed on the Special Needs Register at a stage that reflects their needs. It is the class teacher's responsibility to provide the Learning Support Assistant with the information they need to do their job. Information about children on the Special Needs Register is kept in the Sunshine Room and maintained by the class teachers in conjunction with the special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), Mrs Karen Parker.

Information about all children in the school is confidential and any information known must be used with the utmost discretion.

As the Special Educational Needs/Code of Practice stands, there are different kinds of need described, which may require additional learning support and which is identified on an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

These are ones that may be encountered in this school:

- Mild learning difficulties
- Specific learning difficulties (dyslexia)
- Dyspraxia
- Sensory impairment (hearing or visual)
- Communication impairment including Asperger's syndrome
- Emotional and behavioural difficulties (including AD/HD- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder).

It is important that such categorisation is not used to segregate children but that each child has learning needs which can be successfully addressed with a carefully planned learning programme.

Mild Learning Difficulties

The vast majority of children with mild learning difficulties lack self-confidence in their learning ability and need lots of encouragement and praise. Their needs might be described as follows:

- Mild hearing loss eg. glue ear
- Poor hand/eye co-ordination
- Clumsiness

- Hyperactivity
- Slow to grasp reading and writing skills
- General immaturity
- Poor vocabulary
- Slow to understand new ideas
- Short concentration span

They may be helped by repetition of instructions, short activities, lots of speaking and listening activities to encourage the development of vocabulary and spoken language. The setting of targets with a reward structure may be used to develop concentration spans.

Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)

Children who are described as having specific learning difficulties have average general ability but poor literacy skills (reading, spelling and writing) and sometimes, poor numeracy skills. There is a discrepancy between the child's ability to understand and answer questions orally and the ability of the child to read, write and spell. Such children often have a poor visual memory and easily forget strategies.

These children may be supported by, reducing the amount of writing expected, by transcribing their thoughts, using spell-checkers and word banks and strategies to remember spellings.

Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia is the name given to marked difficulties in co-ordination. It may affect language, perception and thought. Children described as dyspraxic are often described as 'clumsy'. They bump into things and fall over more often than most children and they have difficulty learning to do things which require a high degree of co-ordination.

These children may be supported by breaking the task down into small steps, by providing lists to help the child improve their organisational skills, by reducing the amount of information given at once, and by practising practical skills such as the use of equipment.

Visual Impairment

When working with a visually impaired child you may be asked to:

- Adapt teaching materials, by eg. enlarging them, so that the child can follow the same programme of work as other members of the class

- Supervise the specialist equipment and resources, eg. magnifying equipment
- Ensure the safety of the child during practical activities such as PE, DT and Science.
- Help the child learn any specialist skills eg. to touch type.

Visually impaired children miss out on demonstrations and all sorts of non-verbal clues. They therefore have to be given the opportunity to use their other senses to make sense of what is going on around them and employ 'hands on' approaches to learning.

Hearing Impairment

Children with normal hearing skills acquire ideas and concepts largely through spoken language. For the child with hearing impairment the understanding of language is incomplete. Therefore in supporting a child with such a condition you need to ensure as far as possible that the child is in the best position in the class to hear what the teacher is saying and by checking that the child knows what to do. It may be that instructions have to be repeated face to face with good eye contact. These children need to use visual aids and real experiences as much as possible. If they use hearing aids you may have to check their use.

Communication Impairment (eg. Asperger's Syndrome)

Some children are unable to make sense of the world around them and have difficulties with communication. These children have normal physical appearance and can hear and see but they fail to understand meanings of language and social situations. Some of the special characteristics associated with this difficulty are:

- Limited ability to interpret social cues eg. the emotions of the listener
- Poor at modifying tone of voice and content of listener
- Poor play skills
- Literal interpretations of language
- Anxiety
- Unfounded but genuine fears about certain objects, animals or people
- Dislike of the noise and disorder of playtime

It is very important to use words carefully with these children and to explain thoroughly in order to avoid confusion. Situations that cause anxiety need to

be identified and support needs to be given to help the child manage the situation. Re-assurance and encouragement is very important.

Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

Emotional and behavioural difficulties are a blanket term for children who are 'troubled' for a variety of reasons some to do with a disturbed home life or difficulties with learning. Children who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties may need a high level of adult supervision often provided by the Teaching Assistant. These difficulties may manifest themselves in a range of observed 'behaviours' such as:

- Pencil- tapping
- Humming/noises
- Kicking of chair legs
- Rocking
- Frequently out of seat
- Poking/pushing other children
- Taking others' equipment
- Lashing out
- Swearing
- Defiance
- Damaging property
- Bullying
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Crying
- Running away
- Hiding

The 'Care and Management of Children Policy' is the agreed advice for the management of children's behaviour at Granby. In extreme cases where problems are severe help should be sought from the Senior Management Team and the SENCO.

If a child requires discipline as their behaviour is unacceptable, you should complete the Blue and White Class Transfer Slips and transfer the child with the Blue Class Transfer Slip to the Head Teacher and the Class Teacher should retain the White Class Transfer Slip.

Supporting Children with Literacy Difficulties

Literacy is taught through a structured hour as well as across the curriculum. In your work as a Teaching Assistant you may be asked to help

children who find it difficult to master literacy skills. Your work would be planned by the teacher but is likely to include:

- Encouraging children to look and listen
- Sitting close to children who find it hard to concentrate
- Clarifying or repeating instructions or tasks
- Working with a group on activities planned by the teacher
- Reporting back to the teacher

Encouraging Reading

When sharing a book with a child remember:

- An encouraging manner is vital to the success of a child
- Use techniques such as sharing the reading between you and the child
- If a child gets a word wrong try not to say no, use try again or give the word
- Allow some mistakes if it does not stop the general understanding of the text
- Use all of the clues on the page such as the pictures and contextual clues

Encouraging Spelling

We use simple techniques of LOOK/COVER/WRITE/CHECK to help children to learn spelling.

LOOK- the child looks at the word, says the word, looks for any words within the word to help, looks at the shape of the word

COVER- the word is covered up

WRITE- the child tries to write the word from memory

CHECK- the child checks whether the word is right and tries again if not.

If children ask for the spelling of an unknown word they are encouraged to try the word in their spelling journals before the correct spelling is given. There are a number of computer programmes to help children learn spelling.

Encouraging Writing

Many children become easily disheartened when faced with writing activities. Remember to:

- Encourage any effort the child makes on his/her own
- Check that the child is sitting correctly and holding the pencil correctly
- Some children find it difficult to copy from the board. You may need to transcribe some work onto paper for copying
- Encourage the use of a word processing programme to motivate children with poor writing skills.

Encouraging Numeracy

Numeracy is also taught through a structured hour known as the 'Numeracy Hour'. This includes regular exercises in mental arithmetic, problem solving as well as the teaching of new concepts. Whole class work and small group work are part of this structure.

When working with a child who has numeracy difficulties remember:

- The basic language of maths has to be taught and understood
- The child needs to learn basic concepts of size, shape and classification
- Using practical apparatus and equipment is necessary for many children
- Children with poor memory skills will need practice and repetition

There are a number of computer programmes, which help children to learn basic skills.

Further information on children's learning needs may be sought from class teachers and the SENCO as this is intended to be only a brief summary of some of the more common children's needs that you may encounter.

Keeping Confidences

As referred to earlier, when working closely with a child or group of children you might hear information about a child's home life. This information must be kept confidential. You may want to share it with the class teacher but you may destroy the trust that the child has invested in you if they think that you are going to disclose it to somebody else. This does not apply to

information given by a child, which suggests child abuse. You have a duty to share this information with the Head at the earliest opportunity.

If you are a parent of a child/children at Granby it may be that other parents ask you questions about the school or staff. As a member of staff you will come across information on a personal level about staff and the children. This information should not be shared with outsiders and any parents who ask questions of you out of school should be directed to the school.

Being in Tune with a Child's Physical Needs

This refers to the physical well-being of the child. There are occasions when a child comes to school feeling tired, hungry or not well. Sometimes children, particularly young children are just not ready to learn and are reluctant to perform paper and pencil tasks. Through encouragement the child may complete only part of the task or want to tell you the answers rather than write them down. By acting as a scribe the task can then be completed. Notification of this, needs to be made to the class teacher especially if this becomes a regular occurrence and is a symptom of a greater underlying concern.