

Top Marks for Good Practice

*Getting the Most for Your Child's Schooling
A Checklist for Parents*



scottish
consortium
for learning
disability

Building respect in the
Scottish community

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How A Checklist for Parents should help you

Children with additional support needs learn in a range of specialist and mainstream settings. A Checklist for Parents highlights some of the good practice that takes place in local authority mainstream schools. However, you may find parts of it useful if you are considering other educational settings for your child.

The Checklist:

- Lists questions you could ask when you visit a possible school placement.
- Highlights some good practice to look out for which should help to answer your questions.
- Points you in the direction of further information and advice.

It may be helpful to take this checklist with you when you go on a school visit. It may also be useful to refer to for ideas while your child is at school. The questions should help everyone involved think carefully about your child's needs.

The questions are divided into the following sections:

- Educational inclusion
- Social inclusion
- Health and physical needs

Issues that relate only to primary or secondary schools are marked with a **(P)** or **(S)**.

Finding out more

If your child has complex support needs you may need to ask more specific questions which are not covered in this checklist. You may also need further advice if you find it difficult to get a mainstream place or if there are on-going problems when your child is at school. If you need further advice on your child's education, the organisations listed at the end of the Checklist may be able to help.





Educational inclusion



Is there a whole-school commitment to children and young persons who have additional support needs?

Things to look out for:

- The school welcomes all pupils and works with their abilities and gifts rather than looking at their disabilities.
- There are clear statements about equality, diversity and inclusion in the School Handbook.
- The school has a written policy on children and young persons with additional support needs. Additional support needs is a term now being proposed to include all children who need additional support for learning, for whatever reason. This is a broader term than Special Educational Needs (SEN) which was in use under the older legislation.
- The school understands its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled¹ pupils, and prospective pupils, on the grounds of their disability. Schools have further duties under the SEN and Disability Act 2001.
- All staff in the school are committed to the inclusion of pupils who have additional support needs.

¹ Not all pupils with a disability will have additional support needs and vice-versa. Section 1(1) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines what is meant by disability under that Act.

- There are examples of physical aids and adaptations in the school (for example, wide doorways, ramps, chair lifts, handrails and adaptations to toilets).
- Teaching areas, toilets, eating and recreational areas are accessible to all pupils.
- Teaching areas are well laid out and organised to meet the needs of all pupils.
- There are clear signs and directions to all areas of the school.
- Specialist equipment (for example, information and communication technology (ICT), sloping boards, pencil grips etc.) is made available to pupils who need it.
- Information is available in a choice of formats in order to make it easily accessible to everyone (for example audio, large writing, pictorial and different languages).

Also:

- Ask to see the school's most recent HMIE inspection report, it may be a source of answers to many of your questions. Each year Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education produces reports on the schools (pre, primary and secondary schools) it visits and inspects.

The aims of these reports are to highlight key strengths and indicate where improvements are needed. Anyone with an interest in education provision can access the report – more information on accessing these is available at the end of this booklet.

- Ask to see the School Development Plan as this will highlight the school's priorities for the next 3 years.



Who will support my child's learning?

Things to look out for:

- Class or subject teachers are responsible for educating all pupils including those with additional support needs.
- Learning support co-ordinators, teachers, classroom assistants and Special Educational Needs auxiliaries have clear roles and responsibilities.
- Learning support co-ordinators, teachers and support staff share relevant information about a pupil's learning and support needs.
- Information is made available on the range of local authority support services (for example, education, health and social work services).

What teaching and learning methods will be used to support my child?



Things to look out for:

- Learning support team, teachers and support staff work together in the teaching areas.
- Teaching takes place in class and small groups and one-to-one.
- All pupils work to a broad and balanced curriculum which is designed to meet their individual learning needs.
- Pupils are encouraged to work together and to share ideas and tasks.
- Pupils learn the same things and the school uses a range of ways to teach (for example verbal, visual or through activities) acknowledging that each pupil may learn things more easily through different approaches.
- The school expects and allows pupils to work at a pace and level that is right for them.



How will my child's progress be measured?

Things to look out for:

- Individual learning plans (such as support plans, and individualised educational programmes) are clear and concise and contain short and long-term targets.
- Short-term targets are regularly assessed and monitored by teaching and support staff.
- Long-term targets are reviewed at least once a year with input from everyone who supports the pupil.



How will you involve me in my child's learning?



Things to look out for:

- There is a statement about the importance of home-school partnership in the School Handbook.
- Parents are given a named contact person in the school.
- The school welcomes parent supporters, advocates and Named Persons² in meetings and discussions about a pupil.
- Staff take time to listen to the views and ideas of parents.
- The school uses a variety of methods to encourage parent-school communication (for example, home-school notebooks and diaries).
- Parents are actively encouraged to take part in progress and review meetings.
- When needed, the school provides translation and interpreting services.

² Parents of children who have a Record of Needs (in the near future a Co-ordinated Support Plan) have a right to be supported by a Named Person. Local authorities should give parents information on the Named Person. Changes to the Record of Needs system are proposed by The Scottish Executive, but parents will still be entitled to have a supporter at meetings.



How will you involve my child in decision making?

Things to look out for:

- Pupils are encouraged to exercise a degree of choice and independence in their learning.
- The school supports a pupil's right to be involved in any decisions which affect them.
- The school prepares pupils for meetings and makes sure they feel able to contribute.
- If requested, a member of the school staff, 'buddy' or peer-mentor, friend or relative can support a pupil in meetings.
- The school respects a pupil's decision not to take part in meetings.
- There is a School Council with pupil representation.



Will my child get help with national tests and examinations?

Things to look out for:

- The school has a clear policy on special assessment arrangements³ for pupils who have additional support needs.
- Pupils are helped to make the best possible use of scribes and specialist equipment before they sit exams and tests.



How will my child be supported through the different stages of school life?



Things to look out for:

- When needed, parents of pre-school children are given support from early years' services (for example, health visitors and home visiting teachers). **(P)**
- The local authority makes sure that information and advice on possible school options is given to parents several months before their child begins school. **(P)**
- Children who need a learning plan at the start of Primary One are identified before they start school. **(P)**
- Preparation for secondary school begins in Primary Six and continues through Primary Seven. **(P)**
- Learning support teachers from the pupil's primary and secondary schools work together and share information about a pupil's additional support needs. **(P)** and **(S)**
- Decisions about choices at 16+ are made over time and with support from a range of services. **(S)**
- Pupils with additional support needs have a key worker who helps them plan their future. **(S)**

Social inclusion



How will my child's social development be supported?

Things to look out for:

- School staff work hard to make sure that all pupils take part in school trips and extra-curricular activities and that children with disabilities do not experience discrimination.
- Teachers make sure that children with additional support needs are involved fully in class activities.
- Special Educational Needs auxiliaries help individual pupils with tasks but encourage confidence and independence.
- There are opportunities for all pupils to experience and celebrate success.
- Peer mentors and 'buddies' support children with additional support needs during the school day (for example when they move between classes, have lunch, use transport).
- Children from different backgrounds are encouraged to work and play together.
- Social development is seen as an important part of a child's learning.
- There are transport arrangements in place for pupils and the school has links with escorts.

Health and physical needs



How will my child's care and welfare needs be met?

Things to look out for:

- The school has a written policy on managing the health care needs of pupils (including the administration of medicines).
- Parents and pupils are given information on the roles and responsibilities of the health support services.
- There is a named teacher responsible for liaising with parents, pupils and health care specialists.
- Health Care Plans are developed for pupils who have long term health and medical needs.
- The named teacher, supported by the school doctor/nurse, maintains and reviews a register of pupils who have health care needs.
- Pupils with long term health and medical needs are encouraged to carry a Smart Card (this could hold useful information about their health needs).
- All staff respond appropriately to the health and medical needs of pupils.
- Intimate care routines protect the dignity and well being of pupils.



The following organisations can point you in the direction of more specific information and advice

Enquire

Children in Scotland, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, EH2 4RG
Helpline Number 0845-123-2303 Fax : 0131-228-9852
Typetalk : 0800-959-598
E-mail : Enquire.SENinfo@childreninscotland.org.uk
Websites : www.childreninscotland.org.uk/enquire
www.enquire.org.uk (Young people's site)

The national advice service for special educational needs in Scotland.

ISEA

Independent Special Education Advice
Tel/Fax : 0131-454-0096 Helpline : 0131-454-0082

This organisation provides information, advice and support, including representation, to parents and carers of children with special educational needs.

Advice Service Capability Scotland (ASCS)

11 Ellersly Road, Edinburgh, EH12 6HY
Tel: 0131-313-5510 Fax: 0131-346-1681
Textphone: 0131-346-2529
E-mail: ascs@capability-scotland.org.uk
Website: www.capability-scotland.org.uk

ASCS is Capability Scotland's national disability advice and information service. ASCS also specialises in information on cerebral palsy. Capability Scotland works with children, adults and families living with disability, supporting people in their everyday lives.

Disability Rights Commission

DRC Helpline, FREEPOST, MID02164, Stratford upon Avon, CV37 9BR
Helpline: 08457-622-633 Textphone: 08457-622-644
Fax: 08457-778-878 Website: www.drc-gb.org

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is an independent body, established by Act of Parliament to eliminate discrimination against disabled people and promote equality of opportunity. The DRC Helpline gives advice and information about the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). It is the first place to contact if you want to talk to the DRC.

Down's Syndrome Scotland

158/160 Balgreen Road, Edinburgh, EH11 3AU
Tel: 0131-313-4225 Fax: 0131-313-4285
E-mail: info@dsscotland.org.uk Website: www.dsscotland.org.uk

Down's Syndrome Scotland offers information and advice to carers and professionals who are supporting children and young people with Down's Syndrome. They have published resources that can support schools implementing inclusive education.

ENABLE

6th Floor, 7 Buchanan Street, Glasgow, G1 3HL
Tel: 0141-226-4541 Fax: 0141-204-4398
E-mail: info@enable.org.uk Website: www.enable.org.uk

ENABLE is Scotland's largest membership organisation for people with learning disabilities and their families. They provide a range of services including an information service which is available Monday to Friday between 1.30 pm and 4.30 pm.

The Equity Group

Abbey Mill Business Centre, The Embroidery Mill, Unit 59 Seedhill, Paisley, PA1 1TJ Tel: 0141- 840-4717 Fax: 0141-840-1114

The Equity Group brings together parents who are committed to mainstream education for their children. They also run the Inclusive Learning Network which brings together professionals and parents to share experiences and knowledge of how to make inclusion of children and young people with disabilities work.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education

Tel: 0131-244-0648/ 0649/ 0650

E-mail: info@hmie.gov.uk Website: www.hmie.gov.uk

HM Inspectorate of Education in Scotland is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Ministers. Their role is to provide independent inspections and reviews of schools and other educational establishments. They publish reports of the reviews and inspections they undertake along with other education focused reports. You can find out more about and download the reports from their website.



Minority Ethnic Learning Disability Initiative Limited (MELDI)

Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY

Tel: 0131-475-2500 Fax: 0131-475-2501

E-mail: admin@meldi.org Website: www.meldi.org

MELDI is a unique organisation dedicated to the inclusion of Black /Minority Ethnic disabled persons, their families and carers as valued citizens whose requirements are understood, respected and met appropriately by every service provider. MELDI works in partnership with people from Black/Minority Ethnic communities and service agencies to promote a better understanding of learning disability and special needs.

The National Autistic Society

Central Chambers, 109 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 6LL

Tel: 0141-221-8090 Fax: 0141-221-8118

E-mail: scotland@nas.org.uk Website: www.nas.org.uk

The National Autistic Society provides a range of information, support and services to people with autism and Asperger's Syndrome and their families.

PAMIS

Springfield House, 15/16 Springfield, University of Dundee, Dundee, DD1 4JE

Tel: 01382-344-154 Fax: 01382-227-464

E-mail: pamis@dundee.ac.uk Website: www.dundee.ac.uk/pamis

PAMIS offer information, support, training, campaigning and consultation around issues relevant to families caring for a child or adult with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

Playback

489 Lanark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 5DQ

Tel: 0131-453-5514 Fax: 0131-442-4711

Playback works with and for children and young people with disabilities. They produce a Training Video Resource Pack for schools and other organisations. The pack encourages participants to explore issues of inclusion, equality, values, disability and participation for all as a human rights issue.

Scottish Society for Autism

Head Office, Hilton House, Alloa Business Park, Whins Road, Alloa FK10 3SA Tel: 01259-720-044 Fax: 01259-720-051

Website: www.autism-in-scotland.org.uk

The Scottish Society for Autism provides services, care, support and education for people with autism, their families and carers.

Sense Scotland

5th Floor, 45 Finnieston Street, Clydeaway Centre, Glasgow G3 8JU

Tel: 0141-564-2444 Fax: 0141-564-2443 Text : 0141-564-2442

E-mail: info@sensescotland.org.uk

Website: www.sensescotland.org.uk

This national organisation provides information, advice and services for children and adults who are deafblind or who have sensory impairment and complex communication support needs.

SHS Limited

1a Washington Court, Washington Lane, Edinburgh EH11 2HA
Tel: 0131-538-7717 Fax: 0131-538-7719 Textphone: 0131 477 3684
E-mail: general@shstrust.org.uk Website: www.shstrust.org.uk

This service offers training, research and events on advocacy and participation in services for disabled people, their families, and those who work with them - its focus is the empowerment of users.

You may also find the following publications useful

Count Us In

Achieving Inclusion in Scottish Schools. A report (December 2002) produced by HM Inspectorate of Education which reviews emerging practice in inclusive education. It is available from The Stationery Office at a cost of £10.

Choosing a School. A Guide for Parents

Produced by The Scottish Executive, it gives a general explanation of the law around placing requests. You can get a copy of the booklet from The Scottish Executive Education Department on 0131 244 4485.

A Parents' Guide to Special Educational Needs

Produced by The Scottish Executive and gives advice on choosing a school and your appeal rights if your child is recorded as having special educational needs. You can get this booklet from The Scottish Executive Education Department on 0131 244 4485.

A Guide for Parents in Scotland

Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) – Schools. Produced by the Disability Rights Commission, it gives guidance on legally protecting your disabled child in school. For a copy of this call the DRC Helpline on 08457 622 633.



A Checklist for Parents was written by Sue Wheatley on behalf of the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability. It is based on the report Top Marks for Good Practice – Getting the Most for Your Child’s Schooling by Ailsa Stewart of the Nuffield Centre for Community Care Studies.

You can get a copy of the report and more copies of this leaflet from:

The Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability
Room 16
The Adelphi Centre
12 Commercial Road
Glasgow
G5 0PQ
Telephone: 0141 418 5420
Fax: 0141 429 1142
administrator@sclد.co.uk
www.sclد.org.uk

This booklet can be made available in other formats, for example tape. Please get in touch with SCLD if you need a different format. You can also download a copy of this booklet at the website address given above.



SCLD have also produced an A3 poster promoting inclusion in schools, please get in touch if you would like copies to display in your local school or community.

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