Ordinarily Available Provision, Adaptations and Reasonable Adjustments for Special Education Needs
(Reception, Key Stage 1 & 2)
A Guide For Parents/Carers

Contents

1 Introduction

Ordinarily available provision describes the support that a local authority expects to be made available for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) in early years settings, mainstream schools, and colleges from within their own resources.

Hertfordshire's Ordinarily Available Provision guidance has been developed to support schools and other education settings to reflect on and strengthen their provision (e.g. the support a child receives) for all children and young people, including those with SEND. In this document, we'll refer to it as the "school guidance".

What does this have to do with parents/carers?

The school guidance says that schools should be jointly agreeing with parents/carers the provision that is in place to support their child and making sure they are informed if their child is identified with SEND.

This parent guide has been developed to help parents/carers understand ordinarily available provision in Primary Schools including examples of adaptations and reasonable adjustments that are part and parcel of everyday high-quality inclusive provision. Some of these examples may also apply to early years settings, mainstream secondary schools and colleges.

Adaptations and reasonable adjustments are measures taken to support students with disabilities and/or additional needs, ensuring they can participate in learning on the same basis as their peers.

The examples in this guide were collected from mainstream primary schools in Hertfordshire during the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) Project and from the Ordinarily Available Provision schools guidance.

Many of the examples in this guide are transferable to children with other support needs, but because this work was part of the PINS project there will be other examples which are not detailed.

Pupils with SEN and/or disabilities are entitled to reasonable adjustments as detailed in the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and the Equalities Act (2010).

For children with SEND, the strategies, approaches to teaching, and adaptations to the learning environment should be set out in a written plan that is agreed with the child or young person and their parents/carers and reviewed at least three times a year.

A diagnosis is not required for adaptations and reasonable adjustments to be put in place. This should be based on a child's needs. Provision should be individualised and tailored to the child.

This document does not include every example and does not provide details of adaptations and adjustments that schools must follow for all children.

It is intended to inform parents/carers of options that are used in schools to help parents/carers to have informed conversations with school staff about support that might be appropriate for their child under ordinarily available provision.

2 The Child's Voice

Parents/carers and the child themself play a key role in helping to identify possible reasonable adjustments and adaptations.

Using open, supportive questions or other approaches, children may be able to share their thoughts.

Examples include

- "What parts of school feel hardest?"
- "When do you feel most comfortable or confident?"
- "What helps you concentrate or feel calm?"

- Drawing or using emojis or a traffic-light system that the child can point to to respond to questions (green = okay, red = hard)
- Visual scales or choice cards

Reasonable adjustments should build on what a child does well.
- You could ask:
  - "What are you really good at in school?"
  - "What helps you feel proud of your work?"
This might help identify preferred learning styles (visual, practical, verbal, or hands-on)
Strength-based adjustments often increase confidence and engagement.

3 Cognition and Learning

This section provides examples of inclusive provision for children with cognition and learning needs, with explanations of what they are.

In the classroom

- Access to word banks (an example could be a list of words related to a topic to help with a writing exercise or with spelling)
- Sentence starters (an example could be a worksheet with "I feel happy when….." where the pupil completes the sentence)
- Sound mats (an example could be a sheet about the sound "th" with pictures to show the meaning of words which include "th")
- Vocabulary sheets (an example might be a worksheet about a science topic where pupils choose from a list of key words to fill blanks in the sentences)
- Writing frames (an example might be a worksheet related to a topic with different sections to complete. For example a space to draw a picture of a person, describe their appearance and to describe their job)
- Allowing thinking time
- Adapting how information is presented (font, colour, pictures, spacing etc)
- Checking understanding
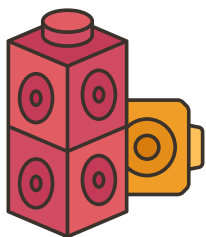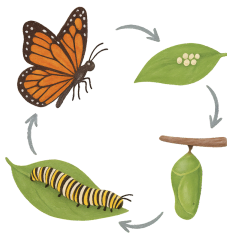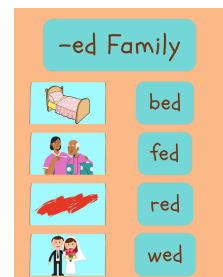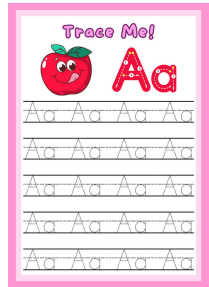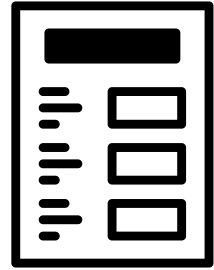
- Visual timetables with pictures and words
- Visual support tools (an example might be a diagram of a biological process)
- Breaking tasks down into smaller chunks
- Giving instructions one at a time
- Questions read to pupils
- Pencil grips
- Coloured pages in workbooks or overlays for reading
- Manual maths tools such as number beads and cubes
- Speaking an answer and help with writing the text
- Reading pen with headphones
- Speech to text software
- Tablet or laptop for recording work
- Learning objective stickers to reduce the volume of writing
- Curriculum adaptations such as alternative recording (drawing, audio, or photos)
- Pre-teaching (teaching concepts and skills before the lesson)
- Interventions (small group learning etc)

Executive Functioning and Independence Skills

- Task checklists or step-by-step visual sequences
- "First–Then" boards to help start tasks or manage transitions
- Colour-coded folders or books to support organisation
- Support for planning long-term tasks (e.g. homework diaries, breaking larger tasks into smaller steps)
- Visual reminders for equipment and routines (e.g. morning checklist or desk mat with a sequence of activities)
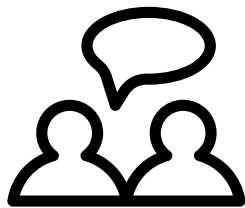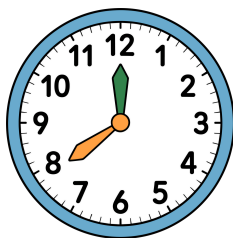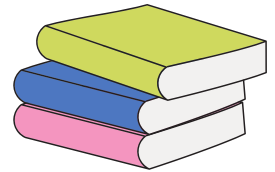
Time management

- Timers
- Visual prompts
- Verbal reminders
- Extra time

Working location

- Consideration of the seating position in the room to avoid unwanted sensory input
- Considerations around table partners
- A child is given the option to work in a quieter location

Homework

Adjustments to homework (e.g. time limited, adapted or not set)

4 Communication and Interaction

This section provides examples of inclusive provision for children that may have difficulty in communicating with others

- The use of a lanyard with visual cards for the child to show to help support their communication
- The use of a card on a child's desk to indicate to the teacher their needs so they know support is required (an example might be red for "I am feeling overwhelmed")
- Visual timetable
- Visual aids
- Supplying objects, photos, symbols to aid learning
- Using clear language
- Giving instructions one at a time
- Chunking work into smaller steps
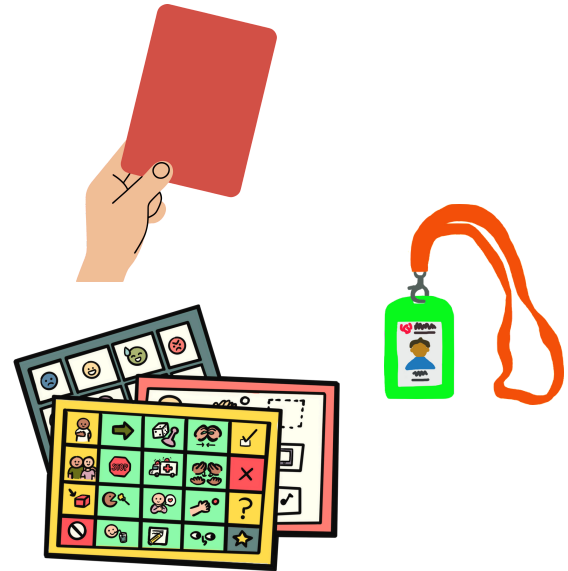
- Now and next cards
- Use of simplified, concrete language
- Comic strip conversations or social scripts
- Opportunities for alternative communication (Picture exchange communication system (PECS), Makaton, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) apps)
- Buddy systems or peer mentors for social communication practice
- More time to process information
- Pre-teaching (teaching concepts, key vocabulary or skills before the lesson)
- Using social stories (a simple, engaging description with pictures of what to expect)
- Interventions (an example might be a supervised social group or club)

5 Social, Emotional and Mental Health

This section includes examples of provision for children and young people with social, emotional, and mental health needs

Transition into school

- Staff members supporting pupils to transition from the car or playground into school
- A soft start in the morning (flexibility with the start time e.g. the child stays in an agreed safe place and joins the class when they are ready or starts school within a time-window or when able to)
- Supported by a pastoral assistant who will take the child to their class when they are ready
- A child allowed to sit in reception with a parent/carer until they have regulated and feel able to move to the classroom
- Entry to school via an alternative, quieter route
- Being allowed to bring a transition item into school from home
- 10 min doing a chosen activity (possibly with a friend) in the morning to support the transition into school
- Parents/carers receiving a follow-up call from school

Lunchtime/breaktime

- Food diary
- Lunchtime clubs
- Lunch at home
- Lunch in a quieter location
- Alternative quieter play area
- Supervised play
- Play zones
- Colour coded benches for children that want to sit and watch but not interact
- Friendship bench to indicate when a child wants to play
- Being allowed to phone home

Knowing what to expect

- Now and next cards
- Visual timetables
- Social stories
- Advance notice
- Verbal scripts
- Visual prompts
- Role play
- Story telling
- Opportunity to ask questions

PE and assembly

- Adaptations to physical education lessons (e.g. alternative roles, sensory breaks, pre-warning of rules)
- Adjusted assemblies or performances (e.g. reduced audience exposure, sensory passes)

Trips

- Planning for the trip and sharing information (e.g. social story, timetable of the day, discussion etc)
- Being allowed to choose a friend to sit with on the coach ahead of time
- Attending trips with a parent/carer
- Alternatives to attending a trip
- Travelling with a parent/carer rather than with the school group

Friendships

- Check-in with the teacher or assistant after playtime
- Buddy system
- Circle time
- Supervised play
- Helping children resolve friendship issues

Emotional wellbeing

- Feeling thermometer so the child can indicate on a personal visual tool how they feel
- Teacher or assistant check-ins
- Worry box (written worries are placed in the box for discussion)
- Red/green cards to indicate mood
- Building relationships with trusted adults
- Children being allowed to phone home from the office at break time / lunchtime
- Check-in-board in the classrooms for children to indicate how they are feeling
- Interaction with the school dog /pets
- Adaptation to the behaviour policy where appropriate
- Calm, quiet space (an example might be a sensory room or reading corner)
- Calm box (with calming objects)
- Movement or sensory breaks
- Teaching breathing techniques

Transitions

- Social stories (pictures and descriptions)
- A review of what is the same and what will be different
- Experiencing the new environment for a short time ahead of the transition
- Parents/carers meeting with the new and old teacher
- Parents/carers and the child being consulted on what actions would support them
- The new teacher spends time with the child in their current setting
- A child finding out who their new teacher is as early as possible
- The child being given the new timetable ahead of time
- The child still having a small amount of contact with the old teacher after the transition
- A transition support group
- Parents/carers able to feedback about how transitions have gone to feed into continuous improvement
- Attending school for a short visit on an inset day before term starts
- Adaptations and adjustments being carried forward into the next academic year

Emotionally based school non-attendance

- Regular contact between parents/carers and school
- Phone call(s)/on-line meeting(s) with child
- Opportunities for the child to build a trusted relationship with a key adult at school
- Work sent home (if appropriate)
- There is guidance for <u>schools</u> and <u>parents/carers</u> about the use of part-time timetables
- Soft start in the morning
- Building up time spent in school over a number of days
- Entering school via a quieter route and/or at a quieter time
- Met by a staff member at reception or the car/playground
- Phone call home to update parent/carer
- School pets used to encourage and support a child to feel able to enter school
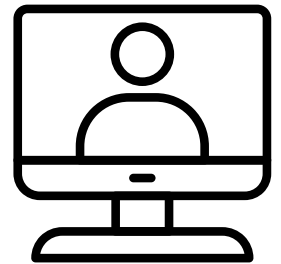
# 6 Sensory and Physical Needs

This section covers provision for children with sensory and/or physical needs

- Movement breaks
- Visual aids
- Uniform adjustments
- Optional dress up days
- Ear defenders
- Alternative to attending assemblies
- Access to food
- Being allowed to remove shoes in class
- The use of stretch bands on a chair
- Sensory circuits
- Allowing rest breaks
- Allowing extra time for processing
- Hearing aids and listening devices
- Text-to-speech devices
- Magnification screen
- Readers and adapted keyboards
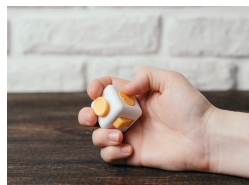
- Standard displays and desk layout in all classrooms
- Calming music and quiet activities following playtime
- Daily mile
- Seating position in the classroom
- Access to the toilet at any time
- Wobble cushions
- Attending the sensory room/calm room
- Quiet corners in the classroom
- Creating opportunities for children to move (handing out books, running errands etc)
- The use of concentration aids (e.g. fidget toys, chew toys, blue tack)
- Stand-up desks
- Writing / reading slopes
- Bold lined or squared paper
- Coloured paper
- Coloured glue sticks
- Brightly contrasting equipment

- Adjusting lighting (e.g. avoiding fluorescent flicker, using natural light)
- Reducing visual clutter on walls and displays
- Offering seating choices (e.g. carpet edge, doorway proximity, standing desks, front or back of class)
- Noise reduction strategies (e.g. soft furnishings, sound field systems)
- Considering the teachers position in relation to the child
- Access to real objects, larger and tactile materials, and practical resources
- Bell ball (a ball that makes noise when it moves)
- Adaptive scissors and cutlery
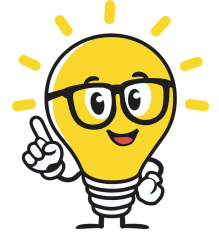
Lunchtime/breaktime
Help choosing food
Food diary
Clubs
Lunch in a quieter location or at home
Alternative quieter play areas or play zones

7 Words used in Education

Parents may hear words used by school staff that they are unfamiliar with, and it is reasonable to ask what something means if you are unsure.

Here are some examples of words used in SEND education that parents may not be familiar with and an explanation of what they mean.

This list does not include all examples.

Metacognition refers to "thinking about thinking," which include awareness and regulation of one's cognitive processes, which is crucial for effective learning and problem-solving.

Precision monitoring is the approach of assessing and reviewing the progress of pupils.

Chunking means breaking down content into smaller parts and allowing more time to help reduce cognitive overload and allow for processing time.

Blank's level of questioning is a framework designed to enhance children's language comprehension and reasoning skills through progressive questioning (naming something, describing it, making predictions and finally making conclusions based on evidence and cause and effect).

Relational Practice
The aim is to create a supportive and inclusive environment through strong and respectful relationships leading to feelings of emotional safety.

Therapeutic thinking
A school approach focusing on mental health and emotional wellbeing, strong relationships and positive behaviour.

8 Support Levels Explained

There are three levels of support through the graduated approach: ordinarily available provision, SEN Support and EHC plans.

The graduated approach is a step-by-step method used by schools and early years settings to identify and respond to a child or young person's SEND.

The graduated method is promoted by the SEND Code of Practice. Its aim is to ensure that support is proportionate to need, moving from inclusive classroom practice to more targeted and specialist interventions as necessary.

Level 1: Ordinarily Available Provision
Ordinarily available provision refers to the inclusive, high-quality teaching and everyday adjustments that all schools and settings are expected to provide for all pupils, including those with mild or emerging SEND. This is provided by class teachers and teaching assistants and does not require any formal identification of SEND.

Level 2: SEN support
SEN support is for children who need additional help beyond ordinarily available provision. This includes more targeted interventions and individualised support. Delivery of SEN support often involves the school's SENCO and can involve external specialists such as speech and language therapists and educational psychologists.

Level 3: EHC plan
An EHC plan is a legal document issued by the local authority for children and young people (aged 0–25) with complex and long-term needs that cannot be met through SEN Support alone. The local authority coordinates the plan, with input from professionals, the setting, the family, and the child or young person. The purpose of the plan is to ensure coordinated, legally enforceable support across education, health, and care services.

Reference: Solving the SEND Crisis Report

9. Practical Tips to Working With School To Support Your Child

1 Build Positive Relationships

- Start with trust and openness
- Align on understanding of actions and goals
- Ask questions
- Be polite but assertive
- Focus on your child's strengths and needs and encourage tailored solutions
- Use "we" language: "How can we support him with…" instead of "You need to…"

- Share strategies that work at home
- Be patient but proactive
- Acknowledge when things go well
- Thank staff who make a difference
- Keep a record of communication (emails, brief notes) so you can refer back later
- If something isn't working, revisit it together and agree on next steps
- Understand the pressures staff may be under – collaboration works both ways

2 Know What SEND Support Your Child is Entitled to

Sources of reference might include
- The school SEND policy and Accessibility Plan (on the school website), SEND code of practice, Hertfordshires Ordinarily Available Provision and SEND Local Offer
- SENDIASS and/or other SEND organizations

- Check whether your child has a SEN Plan (or equivalent), and ask how it is reviewed and updated.
- If you're unsure what the next steps might be or feel support isn't enough, ask school staff to talk you through the options available.

3 Communication and Meetings

- You can ask for a meeting or a chat with the SENCo or teacher. If invited to a meeting you can ask for an agenda and/or what the meeting is about
- You may want to note down questions or concerns you want to discuss
- Bring any documents with you that might support the discussions
- You may want to take someone with you to meetings for support
- You may want to take notes.
- Follow up in writing after a phone call or meeting with the key points of the conversations and any decisions or agreed actions
- Keep your own 'SEND folder' (digital or paper) for reports, plans, and correspondence.

4 Involve Your Child

- Ask them how they feel about school and what helps or doesn't help.
- Their insights can be powerful and guide what support is most effective

10 Communication and Record Keeping

Section 6.65 and 6.7.1 of the SEN Code of Practice states "where a pupil is receiving SEN support (targeted or specialist), schools should talk to parents regularly to set clear outcomes and review progress towards them, discuss the **activities and support that will help achieve them**, and identify the responsibilities of the parent, the pupil and the school. Schools should meet parents at least three times each year".

"A record of the outcomes, action and support agreed through the discussion should be kept and shared with all the appropriate school staff. **This record should be given to the pupil's parents.** The school's management information system should be updated as appropriate."

This record is often called a SEN plan or ADPR (Assess, Plan, Do, Review). School may also use a one page summary or pupil passport to summarize a childs Special Education Needs.

11 Further Reading and Useful Links

Hertfordshire Ordinarily Available Provision (Sept 2025)

SEND Code of Practice (2015)

The "best endeavours" duty (IPSEA website)

Children and Families Act 2014

The Equalities Act (2010)

Herts SEND Local Offer website

Angels - Emotionally Based School Absence Tool

We value feedback on this document which can be sent to
contact@hertsparentcarers.org.uk

www.hertsparentcarers.org.uk

Herts Parent Carer Involvement website

Hertfordshire's Voice for SEND Families
HPCI is the parent carer forum for Hertfordshire. We work to make sure that local service providers know what families with children and young people with SEND need. We gather parent carer views and work in partnership to bring about positive change across health, education and social care services.