



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information Report

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Contents

Contents	1
1. What types of SEND does the school provide for?	3
2. Which staff will support my child, and what training have they had?	3
3. What should I do if I think my child has SEND?	5
4. How will the school know if my child needs SEND support?	5
5. How will the school measure my child's progress?	6
6. How will I be involved in decisions made about my child's education?	7
7. How will my child be involved in decisions made about their education?	8
8. How will the school adapt its teaching for my child?	8
9. How will the school evaluate whether the support in place is helping my child?	10

10. How will the school resources be secured for my child?.....	10
11. How will the school make sure my child is included in activities alongside pupils who don't have SEND?	10
12. How does the school make sure the admissions process is fair for pupils with SEN or a disability?	10
13. How does the school support pupils with disabilities?	11
14. How will the school support my child's mental health and emotional and social development? .	11
15. What support will be available for my child as they transition between classes or settings or in preparing for adulthood?	12
16. What support is in place for looked-after and previously looked-after children with SEND?	13
17. What should I do if I have a complaint about my child's SEND support?	13
18. What support is available for me and my family?	14
19. Glossary	16

Dear Parents and Carers,

The aim of this information report is to explain how we implement our SEND policy. In other words, we want to show you how SEND support works in our school.

If you want to know more about our arrangements for SEND, read our SEND policy.

You can find it on our website or you can ask a member of staff to make a copy/send you the policy.

Note: If there are any terms we've used in this information report that you're unsure of, you can look them up in the Glossary at the end of the report.

Special Educational Needs Information

The aim at St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School is that all children will achieve to their full potential both academically and socially.

Quality teaching is vital to ensure we fulfil this aim for our children. All children are supported by our team of class teachers and teaching assistants. For some children, there may be times when further additional support and/or resources may be needed to help them achieve their targets in school. Our class based teaching assistants are key to supporting children with additional needs and this is managed closely by the class teachers. You will get to know your child's class teachers and teaching assistants and they are always happy to meet with you.

This document has been produced to answer questions you may have about the additional support that is being provided to help your child in school.

1. What types of SEND does the school provide for?

Special educational needs and provision can be considered as falling under four broad areas and our school provides for children with the following needs:

The following information has been taken from the SEN Code of Practice (July 2014).

AREA OF NEED	CONDITION
1. Communication and Interaction	This category of need includes: • Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) • Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
2. Cognition and Learning	This category of need includes: • Specific Learning Difficulties (SPLD) • Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) • Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) • Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)
3. Sensory and Physical	This category of need includes: • Hearing Impairment (HI) • Vision Impairment (VI) • Physical Disability (PD) • Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)
4. Social, Emotional and Mental Health	This category includes a range of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties including ADHD.

2. Which staff will support my child, and what training have they had?

Our special educational needs co-ordinator, or SENCO

Our SENCO is Mrs Siobhan Thomas. She is responsible for the co-ordination of special educational needs throughout the school and to ensure that, as a school, we are following the Code of Practice:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DfES%200581%20200mig2228.pdf>

as well as ensuring all practice in school is in line with our SEN policy (on website).

Mrs. Thomas liaises regularly with staff to ensure that the children are given the most appropriate support/resources for their individual needs. A large part of her role is to work closely with external agencies (see section below) to gain specialist advice and support for individual children. She also ensures that any requests for information on individual children are passed onto the relevant agencies and that parents are kept fully informed of this.

Mrs. Thomas is responsible for the day to day administration tasks such as keeping parents informed, keeping everyone aware in school of any external visitors who come into school to help support our children with additional needs, leading meetings to ensure we have as up to date

information as possible for our children, ordering and tracking our SEN resources to ensure our children can get maximum benefit from them. It is a busy role but very rewarding.

Mrs. Thomas has been SENCO at our school since January 2004 so has many years' experience in this role. She is a qualified teacher with a degree in Psychology. Mrs Thomas achieved the National Award in Special Educational Needs Co-ordination in 2010 and completed the National Professional Qualification in Senior Leadership in September 2024. Mrs Thomas attends regular training to keep up to date with current information and SEN reforms and initiatives.

Mrs. Thomas is also Deputy Safeguarding Lead, Designated Looked After Child Teacher, Mental Health Lead and Staff Governor. Mrs. Thomas is on the Senior Leadership Team.

Mrs. Thomas is allocated two days a week to manage SEN provision and is also a class teacher. Mrs. Thomas can be contacted via the school office or by phone or email.

Class teachers

Class teachers know the children best in school and it is their responsibility, sometimes in liaison with the SENCO if there are concerns about extra needs, to provide teaching and learning experiences which are relevant to the children and their abilities.

All of our teachers receive in-house SEN training, and are supported by the SENCO to meet the needs of children who have SEN.

We also engage with external training with the Marlborough Outreach Team, Fortis Trust Outreach, Medway Educational Psychology Service, SEND Station, CaboodleTherapy and others to meet the needs of our children and staff.

Teaching assistants (TAs)

We have a team of ten teaching assistants (TAs), who are all trained to deliver SEN provision. We also have a Nursery Practitioner. These positions are a mixture of part time and full-time staff.

All of our TAs work closely with children who have special educational needs. Many have specialist knowledge, experience and training which is directed to meet individual needs. The TAs regularly attend training and meetings to update their knowledge. Teaching assistants are trained to deliver interventions such as speech and language programmes, precision teaching, reciprocal reading, Lego therapy, Dyslexia screening, alphabet arc and sensory circuits. We have one trained ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants).

In the last academic year, TAs have been trained in Sensory Circuits, Autism awareness and strategies, Positive Behaviour Support, Phonics, Precision teaching as well as in house systems and assessments.

External agencies and experts

Sometimes we need extra help to offer our children the support that they need. Whenever necessary we will work with external support services to meet the needs of our children with SEN and to support their families.

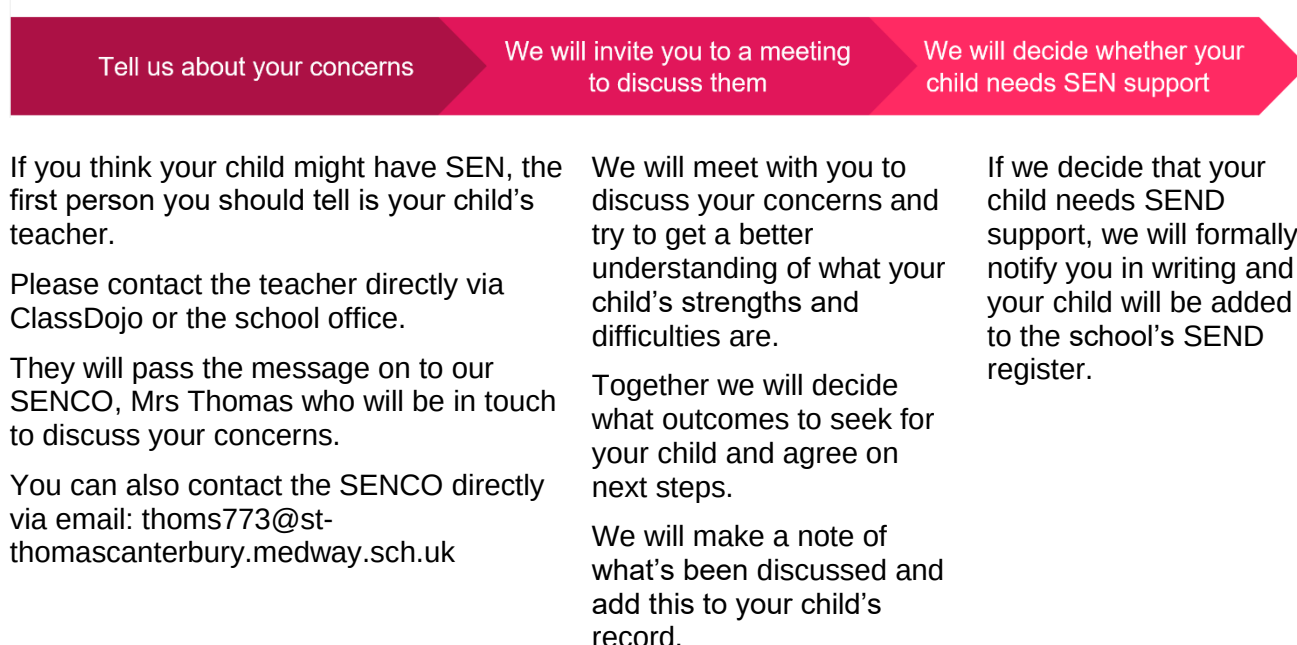
These include:

- Speech and language therapists
- Educational psychologists
- Occupational therapists

- GPs or paediatricians
- School nurses
- Emotional Wellbeing Team
- Play Therapist
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS also known as NELFT)
- Attendance advisors
- Social services and other LA-provided support services
- Fortis Trust Outreach services
- Marlborough Outreach Team

3. What should I do if I think my child has SEND?

If you have any concerns regarding your child's progress or wellbeing in school, please pop in to speak to the class teacher, who will direct you to Mrs Thomas, the SENCo for further discussion if this is needed.



4. How will the school know if my child needs SEND support?

All our class teachers are aware of SEN and monitor progress and attainment closely so they are aware of the children who aren't making the expected level of progress in their schoolwork or socially. This might include reading, writing, maths or behaviours.

We know a child needs extra help when:

- The parents/carers, teaching staff or the pre-school/ previous school raise concerns.
- Teacher's observations knowledge and experience.
- There is a lack of progress.
- There is a change in the child's behaviour, which impacts on their learning.
- A child asks for help.

If the teacher notices that a pupil is falling behind, they try to find out if the pupil has any gaps in their learning. If they can find a gap, they will give the pupil extra support to try to fill it. Children who don't have SEN usually make progress quickly once the gap in their learning has been filled.

If the pupil is still struggling to make the expected progress, the teacher will talk to the SENCO, and will contact you to discuss the possibility that your child has SEN.

The SENCO will observe the pupil in the classroom and on the playground to see what their strengths and difficulties are. She will have discussions with your child's teacher/s, to see if there have been any issues with, or changes in, their progress, attainment or behaviour. She will also compare your child's progress and development with age expectations and available national data.

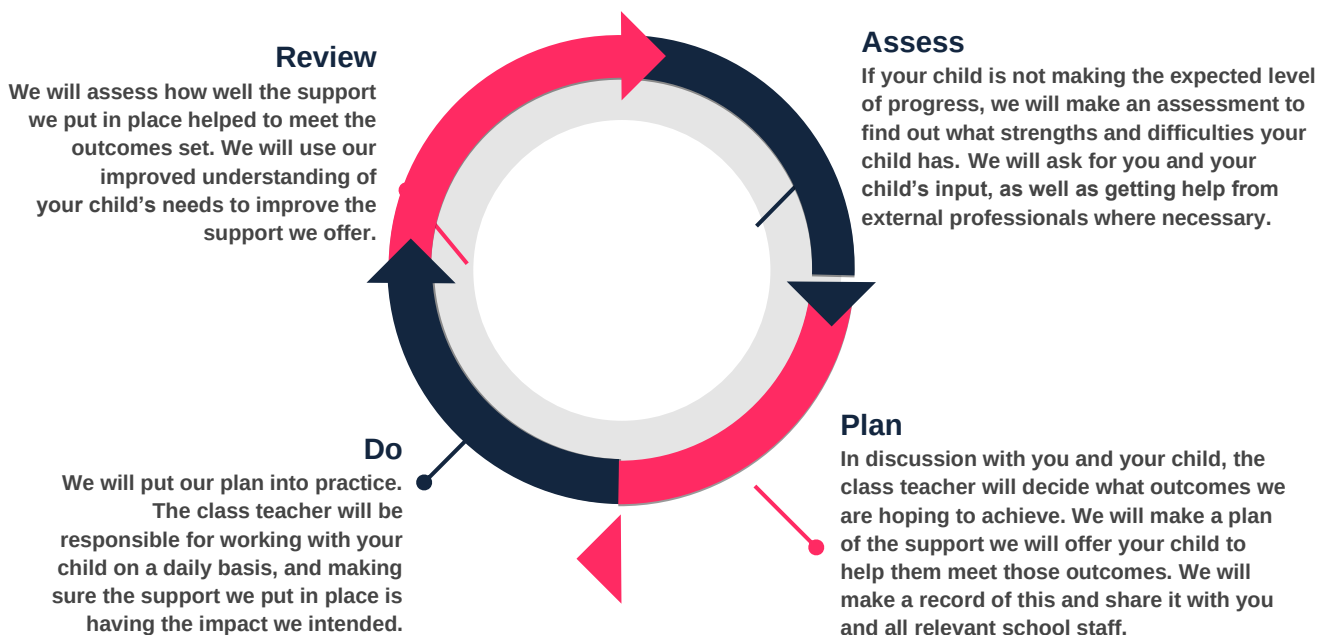
The SENCO will ask for your opinion and speak to your child to get their voice as well. Mrs Thomas may also, where appropriate, ask for the opinion of external experts such as a speech and language therapist, an educational psychologist, or a paediatrician.

Based on all of this information, the SENCO and class teacher will decide whether your child needs SEN support that is additional to or different from quality first teaching. The outcome of the decision will be discussed with you or recorded in writing if requested. If your child does need SEN support, their name will be added to the school's SEN register, and the class teachers will work with you to create a SEN support plan for them.

5. How will the school measure my child's progress?

We will follow the 'graduated approach' to meeting your child's SEN needs.

The graduated approach is a 4-part **cycle of assess, plan, do, review**.



As a part of the planning stage of the graduated approach, we will set outcomes that we want to see your child achieve.

Whenever we run an intervention with your child, we will assess them before the intervention begins. This is known as a 'baseline assessment' or entry data. We do this so we can see how much impact the intervention has on your child's progress.

We will track your child's progress towards the outcomes we set over time and improve our offer as we learn what your child responds to best.

This process will be continual. If the review shows a pupil has made progress, they may no longer need the additional provision made through SEN support. For others, the cycle will continue and the school's targets, strategies and provisions will be revisited and refined.

6. How will I be involved in decisions made about my child's education?

Class teachers have overall responsibility for the planning and teaching of the curriculum for all children, which is monitored by leaders in our school. You will receive a termly letter to show you what your child is working on in school. Homework tasks will be sent home to enhance your child's learning.

You will also be kept informed about your child's progress and the support in place through parent consultations (usually held in Terms 1, 3 and 6) and your child's annual school report (Term 6).

Should your child require additional support, they may be included in a focussed intervention group. These will be run by the class teacher or a teaching assistant and will take place either within the classroom or in a quiet area close by. These interventions will usually last for a term (6/12 weeks).

Specific, planned interventions may be provided for your child in consultation with the head teacher, during pupil progress meetings or with the SENCo. All interventions will be recorded on the class provision map and for children who receive School Support, they will have an individual provision support plan to show the targets they are being supported with in school. These will be shared with you at least three times a year and will suggested activities for you to work on at home will be shared by the class teacher. If you have any queries regarding the provision, please speak to the class teacher in the first instance and then the SENCo.

Occasionally a child or family may need more specialist support from an external agency and as a result may be chosen for discussion at our In School Review (ISR). These meetings are held three times a year and are an opportunity for the SENCo to seek advice and support from external agencies such as the EP (Educational Psychologist). We will inform you, by letter, if your child is going to be discussed. There will also be the opportunity for you to complete a short contribution form to ensure your views are shared, with regard to your child's progress and any concerns you may have. The SENCo will contact you after the ISR to provide you with a summary of the discussion and the action points.

If a referral to an external agency is recommended, this will be completed in conjunction with parents/carers and then sent on to the relevant agency. Referrals are usually recommended once the school has provided a high level of support for a child over a sustained period of time. In some cases, however, specialist advice may be required immediately due to the nature of the concern e.g., a child who has significant speech and language difficulties.

We know that you're the expert when it comes to your child's needs and aspirations. We want to make sure you have a full understanding of how we're trying to meet your child's needs, so that you can provide insight into what you think would work best for your child.

We also want to hear from you as much as possible so that we can build a better picture of how the SEN support we are providing is impacting your child outside of school.

If your child's needs or aspirations change at any time, please let us know right away so we can keep our provision as relevant as possible.

After any discussion we will make a record of any outcomes, actions and support that have been agreed on our internal systems. If you have concerns that arise between these meetings, please contact your child's class teacher either via Class Dojo or via the office manager.

We will provide annual school reports on your child's progress

Your child's class teacher will meet you, at least three times a year, to:

- Set clear outcomes for your child's progress
- Review progress towards those outcomes

- Discuss the support we will put in place to help your child make that progress
- Identify what we will do, what we will ask you to do, and what we will ask your child to do

The SENCO, Mrs Thomas, may also attend these meetings to provide extra support or if requested.

7. How will my child be involved in decisions made about their education?

The level of involvement will depend on your child's age and ability. We recognise that no two children are the same, so we will decide on a case-by-case basis, with your input.

We may seek your child's views by asking them to:

- Attend meetings to discuss their progress and outcomes
- Prepare a presentation, written statement, video, drawing, etc.
- Discuss their views with a member of staff who can act as a representative during the meeting
- Complete a survey, questionnaire etc.

8. How will the school adapt its teaching for my child?

Your child's teacher/s is/are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of all the children in their class. All children are entitled to quality first teaching, which will be adapted to individual children's needs to enable them to access the curriculum.

High-quality teaching is our first step in responding to your child's needs. We will make sure that your child has access to a broad and balanced curriculum in every year they are at our school.

We will differentiate (or adapt) how we teach to suit the way the child works best. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to adapting the curriculum, we work on a case-by case basis to make sure the adaptations we make are meaningful to your child.

These adaptations include:

- Differentiating our curriculum to make sure all children are able to access it, for example, by grouping, 1-to-1 work, scaffolding, pre-teaching, adapting the teaching style or content of the lesson, etc.
- Differentiating our teaching, for example, giving longer processing times, pre-teaching of key vocabulary, reading instructions aloud, etc.
- Adapting our resources and staffing
- Using recommended aids, such as laptops, coloured overlays, visual timetables, larger font, etc.
- Teaching assistants will support children on a 1-to-1 basis when needed but we encourage independent learning where possible.
- Teaching assistants will support children in small groups when directed by the class teacher and will support in the classroom where possible. Teachers may also lead interventions.

We may also provide the following interventions:

AREA OF NEED	CONDITION	HOW WE TYPICALLY SUPPORT THESE PUPILS
Communication and interaction	Autism spectrum disorder	Visual timetables Social stories Lego Therapy Social skills groups
	Speech and language difficulties	Speech and language therapy Speech Link and Language Link
Cognition and learning	Specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia	Writing slope Coloured overlays Specialist books
	Moderate learning difficulties	
	Severe learning difficulties	
Social, emotional and mental health	ADHD, ADD	Quiet workstation Quiet work areas available Sensory circuits
	Adverse childhood experiences and/or mental health issues	Lunchtime nurture groups ELSA support Counselling Lego Club
Sensory and/or physical	Hearing impairment	Specialist teacher support
	Visual impairment	Specialist teacher support Use of specialist technology
	Multi-sensory impairment	Specialist teacher support
	Physical impairment	Specialist teacher support

These interventions (not exhaustive) are part of our contribution to Medway Authority's local offer.

9. How will the school evaluate whether the support in place is helping my child?

We will evaluate the effectiveness of provision for your child by:

- Reviewing their progress towards their goals each term
- Reviewing the impact of interventions after six weeks
- Using pupil questionnaires
- Monitoring by the SENCO
- Using provision maps to measure progress
- Holding a person-centred annual review (if they have an EHCP)
- Termly pupil progress meetings

10. How will the school resources be secured for my child?

It may be that your child's needs mean we need to secure:

- Extra equipment or facilities
- More teaching assistant hours
- Further training for our staff
- External specialist expertise

If that's the case, we will consult with external agencies to get recommendations on what will best help your child access their learning.

The school will cover up to £6,000 of any necessary costs. If funding is needed beyond this, we will seek it from our local authority.

11. How will the school make reasonable adjustments to ensure that activities are accessible to my child alongside pupils who don't have SEND?

All of our extra-curricular activities and school visits are available to all our children, including our before and after-school clubs.

All children are encouraged to go on our school trips, including our Year 6 residential trip to Osmington Bay.

All children are encouraged to take part in sports day, school plays (Infant Nativity, The Passion Play and Year 6 Production) Masses and special workshops.

No pupil is ever excluded from taking part in these activities because of their SEN or disability and we will make whatever reasonable adjustments are needed to make sure that they can be included where appropriate.

12. How does the school make sure the admissions process is fair for pupils with SEND?

Admission arrangements

The admission of pupils with an EHC Plan is dealt with by a completely separate procedure which is integral to the making and maintaining of EHC plans by the pupil's home local authority. Details of this separate procedure are set out in the [SEN Code of Practice](#). All children whose education, health and care (EHC) plan names one of the schools will be admitted before any other places are allocated.

The arrangements for the admission of prospective children with a disability and prospective children with SEN are fair and there are a committee of Governors who oversee this process. They follow the guidance strictly.

All prospective children whose EHC plan names the school will be admitted before any other places are allocated as per our admissions criteria.

13. How does the school support pupils with disabilities?

As a school we are happy to discuss individual access requirements and will, wherever possible, make reasonable adjustments to meet these requirements.

The school has an up-to-date Accessibility plan which highlights what we already have in place and the plans we have for future developments. This can be found on the school website.

Facilities and provisions we have at present include:

- Ramps into school and onto the playground to make them more accessible for all children, staff and visitors
- Toilets for adults and children with disabilities.
- Visual strips on stairs/steps etc. to support children/adults with visual impairments.
- Wide doors in most areas of the building.
- Provision of auxiliary aids and services.
- Ensure disabled children can participate in the curriculum through reasonable adjustments and resources.
- Improved physical environment to enable disabled children to access all we can provide.
- Quiet areas.
- Sensory room.
- Sensory and OT resources.
- Sensory Circuits.

14. How will the school support my child's mental health and emotional and social development?

The school offers a variety of pastoral support for all children including those who may be experiencing emotional difficulties or trauma. These include:

- Opportunities for children to talk to members of staff such as the head teacher, teachers, teaching assistants, and midday meal supervisors, if they have any concerns.
- We have three Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) who work with the children individually in 6-week blocks (or longer if appropriate) to support emotional wellbeing needs.
- One of our TAs is qualified to offer Drawing and Talking Therapy.
- ELSA's also provide drop-in sessions and lunchtime clubs.
- Lunchtime clubs for children who find it difficult to cope on the playground. Fun games and activities are made available to help provide children with social skills to enable them to form friendships.
- Peer mentors who help to create a culture of team work and kindness to eliminate bullying and to look after each other.
- Social skills groups run by teaching assistants.
- Support from external agencies such as play therapists and outreach support when deemed appropriate.
- Children with SEN are encouraged to be part of the school council and GIFT team.

- Children with SEN are also encouraged to be part of Lego club to promote social skills/teamwork/building friendships
- We run a lunchtime nurture club for children who need extra support with social or emotional development during unstructured times.

We provide extra pastoral support for listening to the views of children with SEN by through the lunchtime Oasis group, Lego clubs and ELSA support.

We run a nurture club for children who need extra support with social or emotional development at lunchtimes called Oasis. This allows children a structured time at lunchtime and allows them to emotionally regulate for the afternoon.

We have a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying. We support all children when there are incidents of bullying to resolve situations and stop it. We promote anti-bullying behaviours with our strong caring and respectful ethos.

15. What support will be available for my child as they transition between classes or settings, or in preparing for adulthood?

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School understands that moving schools can be a challenging experience and, therefore has strategies in place to support this transition. These include:

- Meetings between the pre-school or receiving school prior to the child starting/leaving, wherever possible.
- Mrs Copperwheat, our Foundation Stage leader and/or Mrs Thomas will visit the main feeder pre-schools/nurseries if required.
- Additional visits as well as the usual induction procedures will be arranged for any children who may need extra time in their new school.
- Transition booklets will be provided for all children so they have visual aids prior to starting – these will include photographs of the new teacher/classroom and other areas of the school.
- We also use outreach services to support children with SEN as they move to secondary school.
- The SENCo liaises with the receiving school's SENCo to share information regarding any children with special educational needs.
- Separate meetings area arranged with secondary school staff, the parents/cares and where appropriate the pupil, for children with more complex needs.
- Secondary School staff visit Year 6 pupils and staff.
- Buddy systems with older children in the school can be put into place to support the younger children on the playground.

Between years

To help children with SEND be prepared for a new school year we:

- Ask both the current teacher and the next year's teacher to attend final pupil progress meeting of the year when the child's SEN is discussed
- PCARs, PEPs etc will invite the new teacher to attend
- Planned lessons with the incoming teacher towards the end of the summer term

- Build relationships between the child and the new teachers
- Transition books and visuals when needed
- Class teachers will hold detailed and robust “hand up” meetings and provide all necessary documents and records

Between schools

- We will share information with your child’s new school if you move mid-year.
- Between phases (for primary schools)
- The SENCO of the secondary school will meet with Mrs Thomas at either placement. They will discuss the needs of all the children who are receiving SEN support and records will be shared.
- Children will be prepared for the transition by:
 - Practising with a secondary school timetable
 - Learning how to get organised independently
 - Marlborough Outreach Team may visit to provide specialist support for transition
 - Additional support will be put in place for children who need this

16. What support is in place for looked-after and previously looked-after children with SEND?

Mrs Thomas is the designated teacher for looked-after children and previously looked-after children here. (DLACT)

Mrs Thomas will endeavour to make sure that all teachers understand how a looked-after or previously looked-after pupil’s circumstances and their SEN might interact, and what the implications are for teaching and learning.

Children who are looked-after or previously looked-after will be supported much in the same way as any other child who has SEND. However, looked-after children will also have a personal education plan (PEP). We will make sure that the PEP and any SEN support plans or EHC plans are consistent and complement one another. Mrs Thomas will also attend all LAC meetings.

Our school is a trauma informed school and the staff are all equipped to support all children.

17. What should I do if I have a complaint about my child’s SEND support?

Where parents have concerns about our school’s SEND provision, they should first raise their concerns informally with the SENCO. We will try to resolve the complaint informally in the first instance. If this does not resolve the concerns, parents are welcome to submit their complaint formally.

Complaints about SEN provision in our school should be made to the class teacher/SENCO/Head Teacher in the first instance. They will then be referred to the school’s complaints policy which can be found on our school website or requested from the school office.

If you are not satisfied with the school’s response, you can escalate the complaint. In some circumstances, this right also applies to the child themselves.

Formal complaints about SEND provision in our school should be made to the Headteacher in the first instance. They will be handled in line with the Trust’s complaints policy.

To see a full explanation of suitable avenues for complaint, see pages 246 and 247 of the [SEN Code of Practice](#).

If you feel that our school discriminated against your child because of their SEND, you have the right to make a discrimination claim to the first-tier SEND tribunal. To find out how to make such a claim, you should visit: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/disability-discrimination>

You can make a claim about alleged discrimination regarding:

- Admission
- Exclusion
- Provision of education and associated services
- Making reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services

Before going to a SEND tribunal, you can go through processes called disagreement resolution or mediation, where you try to resolve your disagreement before it reaches the tribunal. More information about disagreement resolution and mediation services in Medway Local Authority area can be found [here](#).

18. What support is available for me and my family?

If you have questions about SEND, or are struggling to cope, please get in touch to let us know. We want to support you, your child and your family.

To see what support is available to you locally, have a look at your Medway's local offer. Medway LA publishes information about the local offer on their website:

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200307/local_offer

Our local special educational needs and disabilities information advice and support services (SENDIASS) organisations are:

- [Medway Parents & Carers Forum](#)
- [Medway SEND Information Advice and Support service \(SENDIAS\)](#)
- [Medway Family Information Service](#)
- [Citizens Advice Medway](#)
- [Healthwatch Medway](#)
- [Positive Behaviour Support \(PBS\)](#).

Local charities that offer information and support to families of children with SEND are:

- [KIDS](#)
- [Contact.org.uk](#)
- [Council for Disabled Children](#)
- [Scope](#)
- [Mencap](#)
- [SEN magazine](#)
- [Action for Children](#)
- [Disability Rights UK](#)
- [Family Fund](#)
- [Disabled Living Foundation](#)
- [SEND GOV.UK](#)
- [The Mobility and Support Information Service](#).

National charities that offer information and support to families of children with SEND are:

- [IPSEA](#)
- [SEND family support](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Family Action](#)
- [Special Needs Jungle](#)

19. Glossary

- **Access arrangements** – special arrangements to allow pupils with SEND to access assessments or exams
- **Annual review** – an annual meeting to review the provision in a pupil's EHC plan
- **Area of need** – the 4 areas of need describe different types of needs a pupil with SEND can have. The 4 areas are communication and interaction; cognition and learning; physical and/or sensory; and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- **CAMHS** – child and adolescent mental health services
- **Differentiation** – when teachers adapt how they teach in response to a pupil's needs
- **EHC needs assessment** – the needs assessment is the first step on the way to securing an EHC plan. The local authority will do an assessment to decide whether a child needs an EHC plan.
- **EHC plan** – an education, health and care plan is a legally-binding document that sets out a child's needs and the provision that will be put in place to meet their needs.
- **First-tier tribunal/SEND tribunal** – a court where you can appeal against the local authority's decisions about EHC needs assessments or plans and against discrimination by a school or local authority due to SEND
- **Graduated approach** – an approach to providing SEND support in which the school provides support in successive cycles of assessing the pupil's needs, planning the provision, implementing the plan, and reviewing the impact of the action on the pupil
- **Intervention** – a short-term, targeted approach to teaching a pupil with a specific outcome in mind
- **Local offer** – information provided by the local authority which explains what services and support are on offer for pupils with SEND in the local area
- **Outcome** – target for improvement for pupils with SEND. These targets don't necessarily have to be related to academic attainment
- **Reasonable adjustments** – changes that the school must make to remove or reduce any disadvantages caused by a child's disability
- **SENCO** – the special educational needs co-ordinator
- **SEN** – special educational needs
- **SEND** – special educational needs and disabilities
- **SEND Code of Practice** – the statutory guidance that schools must follow to support children with SEND
- **SEND information report** – a report that schools must publish on their website, that explains how the school supports pupils with SEND
- **SEND support** – special educational provision which meets the needs of pupils with SEND
- **Transition** – when a pupil moves between years, phases, schools or institutions or life stages