



SEND indicator matrix: Early years and primary



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SEND AREA: Cognition and learning

SEND identifiers

Struggles/has difficulties with:

- Handwriting, mark-making and formation, and hand grip
- Reading all words, sounds, and lines, despite using reading ruler and/or finger to track
- Tracing lines and shapes
- Making puzzles and jigsaws; copying patterns
- Playing memory and “snap” games; matching pairs
- Reciting the alphabet, nursery rhymes, poems, and/or chants
- Copying accurately from a piece of written or numerical text placed next to learner
- Ordering numbers at age-appropriate level
- Recalling days of the week and/or months at age-appropriate levels
- Recalling information shortly after learning it – e.g., 30 seconds later
- Following multi-step instructions provided verbally
- Completing work within the given time frame
- Counting, number bonds, giving change, telling the time, times tables, and/or recalling digits

Exhibits signs of:

- Attention-seeking in class
- Work-avoidance behaviours – tearing up work; dropping equipment to avoid working
- Low self-esteem and limited learning resilience
- Copying others' work and answers
- Inability to focus when sitting on the carpet; struggling to know what to do after instructions
- Distraction – trying to make others laugh when teacher turns their back; making noises; laughing
- Mixing up letters; reversing letters and/or numerals such as b/d or 6/9; missing letters; large, immature writing
- Poor phonological reading; not making progress despite structured interventions

What to do next

- SENDCo to carry out additional observations across the setting, both in class and during unstructured sessions. This may include direct observations of activities in class and/or 1:1 with the SENDCo/teacher
- Consider appropriate writing assessments; phonic screening and checklists in class, etc.
- Observe the child place the alphabet in an arc shape; continue with assessment of phonics/hand-eye co-ordination/recall, etc.
- Observe whether the child counts reliably using concrete apparatus/small items
- Observe how the child orders numerals and counts out loud
- Observe/assess how the child orders days of the week/months of the year

- Carry out a phonic screening test
- Assess using standardised reading tests
- Encourage the learner to try using a coloured overlay and/or reading ruler if visual difficulties are noted
- Administer basic test of writing formation (a–z) and numerals (1–20)
- Refer for CTOPP-2 (comprehensive test of phonological processing, second edition) and/or PhAB2 (phonological assessment battery, second edition) to check for hearing loss

SEND AREA: Communication and interaction

SEND identifiers

Struggles/has difficulties with:

- Making and keeping friends
- Making and maintaining appropriate eye contact
- Listening
- Turn-taking in conversations, games, class discussions, PE, and/or social activities

Exhibits signs of:

- Avoiding social friendships and/or falling out with friends
- Staring and/or avoiding eye contact
- Unusual head movements – putting head on the desk or constantly turning head
- Hyper-focusing on stimuli in the environment, such as small images or class displays; collecting tiny items
- Poor participation in activities; can end in social fall-outs or aggression
- Immature play; playing chase games/tag; playing with small items
- Pushing others away and/or withdrawing into quiet areas
- Invading other people's personal space; prodding; inappropriate hugging
- Laughing out loud and/or singing at inappropriate times; humming
- Seeking out sensory play using blu tack/sensory toys; fixating on small items
- Lining up equipment such as pens, rulers, fidget toys, etc.
- Becoming angry when peers touch their equipment/pens, etc.
- Feeling distressed, upset, or angry when touching different textures, such as paint or sand
- Spitting at others or biting others/self when angry
- Hitting own head with hands/against a wall
- Screaming or making a high-pitched screech
- Covering ears with hands or putting coat over head in response to loud noises
- Mimicking inappropriate phrases heard from peers and or movies
- Seeking out repetitive patterns; needing a constant routine; becoming upset by unplanned events
- Becoming upset and/or crying due to changes in seating plans
- Fixating on talking about own interests; being obsessed with the same type of interests
- Struggling with eating in loud areas; withdrawing to quiet areas
- Struggling with crowded places; preferring the library and/or other quiet places
- Damaging uniform, such as tearing shirt, biting collar or sleeve, tearing tights, etc.
- Pulling own hair

What to do next

- Further referral to the speech and language team (using an interpreter if EAL learner is working at bands A–C)
- Observations of turn-taking games such as Lego therapy, Ludo, etc.
- Carry out ABC (Antecedents, Behaviour, Consequences) observations
- Create a sensory profile
- Administer a self-esteem questionnaire
- Administer social and pragmatic profile assessments
- Gather pupil voice through Talking Mats, speech and language assessments and frameworks, and/or visual screening tools

SEND AREA: Social, emotional, and mental health difficulties

SEND identifiers

Exhibits signs of:

- Low attendance and poor punctuality to school; arriving late to lessons and/or avoiding lessons
 - Poor handover from parent/carer to school staff; clinging to parent/carer and/or running away/absconding
 - Stomach aches; feeling sick; headaches and/or migraines
 - Low motivation and low mood; looking sad; crying
 - Attention-seeking with adults; calling out in class
 - Shouting at others; calling names; being critical of others
 - Panic attacks; breathing difficulties
 - Seeking support and/or clinging when adult moves away
 - Engaging in conflict with peers; being hurtful towards peers, both verbally and physically
 - Losing things; dropping pens, etc.
 - Breaking pens/equipment; ripping up paper/books
 - Struggling to sit for lengths of time; fidgeting/tapping hands, fingers, and legs; moving up and down and out of the chair frequently
 - Drawing the same images over and over; making repetitive actions and/or fixating on the same actions,
 - Becoming upset due to changes to routine
 - Drawing on hands and/or legs, scratching arms, and/or pinching fingers
 - Stimming, including humming/making noises
 - Emotional outbursts manifesting as anger; numbness; crying; fight, flight, or freeze reactions; etc.
 - Breaking into others' conversations; interrupting/talking over others
 - Banging fists on the table/wall; throwing/upturning furniture
 - Sitting under the table; hiding in cupboards, corners, etc.
 - Running out of class; absconding from lessons
 - Pushing/hitting peers and/or staff
 - Fear in response to sounds; struggling with fire alarms
 - Repeating sexualised language/phrases, and/or racist words
 - Not wanting to shower; poor personal hygiene
 - Falling asleep in class and/or struggling to fall asleep at night
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What to do next

- SENDCo liaises with the wellbeing and pastoral team and EAL Co-ordinator
- SENDCo to carry out a sensory profile in the environment
- SENDCo to meet parents to initiate the assess, plan, do, review process
- Complete a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) with learner and parents/carers in home or preferred language; score areas of needs

SEND AREA: Physical and/or sensory needs

SEND identifiers

Exhibits signs of:

- Squinting/struggling to see when reading from the interactive white board
- Struggling to focus under bright lights; preferring dark/dim light
- Not hearing sounds or staff when speaking to them
- Missing or not reacting to loud sounds, such as bells and/or fire alarms
- Walking on tip toes and/or missing a step
- Struggling to fasten buttons and/or tie shoes, for example when getting changed for PE
- Banging or bumping into furniture and/or other people; clumsiness; falling off chairs
- Having a poor handwriting grip
- Struggling to thread beads, roll clay into shapes, use paints/pastels, etc.
- Struggling to use scissors and/or glue – i.e., cutting and sticking
- Poor organisation; losing equipment; dropping items
- Poor balance in PE; poor coordination when walking up steps or stairs

What to do next

- Possible referral to an optometrist
 - EAL Co-ordinator asks the parent/carer to refer to the GP
 - EAL Co-ordinator asks the parent/carer to refer to an optometrist/audiologist
 - SENDCo to refer to an occupational therapist
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