



Individual education plans

Individual education plans (IEPs) are used by many schools as a planning, teaching and reviewing tool for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN). Here, we explain what IEPs are and how you and your child can be involved with them.

What is an IEP?

An IEP is a document that helps teaching staff to plan for your child. It should include strategies to help them learn and be used to review their progress. The IEP should be guided by your child's profile, records, assessments, their strengths and statement of SEN if they have one. It should help your child to access and engage with the curriculum.

IEPs are different for each child or young person and should set out what should be taught, how it should be taught and how often. There isn't a standard format for IEPs, but they generally include details of short-term targets and the additional support that has been put in place to help your child meet them. The document should be accessible and understandable to all. It should be agreed by you and, wherever possible, your child as it's important for you to be involved at this first stage.



What should be in an IEP?

- The nature of the child or young person's learning or developmental difficulties
- What help should be given
- Who will give the help, what equipment, programmes or materials will be used
- When, where and how often the help will be given
- The nature of the support required from parents at home
- Any pastoral care or medical requirements
- The monitoring and review arrangements
- How it will be decided if the help has been successful (you may see the phrase 'success criteria')

You may want to consider this list before attending a review meeting so that you are clear about what needs to be included.

Targets

IEPs should focus on up to three or four key short-term targets for your child. The targets should relate to literacy and numeracy but can also focus on other areas, such as helping your child to develop independence skills.

For children and young people on the autism spectrum targets may focus on communication, social inclusion and flexibility.

Targets that are set for your child should be SMART:

- specific so it is clear what your child should be working towards
- measurable so that it is clear when the target has been achieved



-
- achievable
- realistic so that they are relevant to your child's needs and circumstances
- time-bound (to be achieved by a specified time).

When setting targets school staff should consider your child's age, ability, concentration, emotional and behavioural issues and how they prefer to learn as well as your home circumstances.

You should be involved and informed of any action the school is going to take and any help that you may be able to give your child at home. Guidance from the Department of Education suggests that communication with parents is vital and that your wishes, feelings and knowledge should be taken into account. With a thorough understanding of your child, you can give vital support at home to help them meet their targets.

Where possible your child should also contribute to the targets set for them. The school should consider whether your child:

- knows they have an IEP and why
- contributes to the preparation of their IEP
- knows what targets have been set for them
- knows why support is being given
- gets feedback about their progress in a format they can understand
- gets the chance to express their views and be listened to

The content of an IEP should change as your child's needs develop. If specific targets set in an IEP are achieved, it means that the extra help has been successful. New targets then need to be set at an IEP review meeting.

Alternatively, it may be decided that the help given has been so successful that an IEP is no longer needed.



Strategies and resources

The section that outlines the strategies and resources the school will use to help your child reach their targets should include:

- who will carry out the support eg teacher, classroom assistant
- when the support will happen eg 4 x 30 minute small group sessions per week)
- what the nature of the support will be eg teaching strategies, resources, interventions and/or programmes
- where the support will happen eg in class or elsewhere

Success criteria

This section of the IEP will contain information on how your child is progressing with their targets, whether or not they have been achieved and if the additional help has been successful.

When should IEPs be used?

IEPs should be used to set out the extra help offered to individual pupils who need it, normally in stages 2 and 3 of the five possible stages of identifying, assessing and providing for a child's SEN. They should also be used for children undergoing statutory assessment and for those with [statements of special educational needs](#).

If a child moves from one stage to another or to a statement they should have a new IEP. It's likely that a new IEP will be drawn up after each review too, as the targets on them should be short-term.

If a pupil has a statement, the short-term targets and strategies set out in their IEP should be linked to the overall objectives and provision set out in their statement.



Managing IEPs

Teachers should have time set aside for writing, teaching and reviewing IEPs. All IEP targets must be achievable for both the pupil and teacher.

Regular periods of time working with a pupil with SEN or the pupil working on an IEP target should be included in the teacher's daily or weekly teaching plans.

Reviewing IEPs

IEPs should be reviewed regularly, normally termly or twice a year. You should be invited to attend and take part in reviews. At least one review can be carried out at parents' evening. Where possible, everyone involved in your child's education and support should take part in the review.

Reviews of IEPs should not be confused with the statutory annual review meeting that is carried out for children with a statement of SEN. However, the child's IEP should be discussed as part of this meeting.

What does this mean in practice?

When reviewing your child's IEP the teacher should consider:

- if appropriate targets had been set for your child
- whether or not your child met the targets
- if the strategies and resources were suitable and frequent enough

- if the strategies were effective
- whether your child make progress in other areas
- if there any unresolved problems that need to be addressed



- whether your child stay at the stage they are on or move up or down the five stage process.

Both your views and those of your child should be sought and recorded.

After considering progress, the targets to be achieved by the next review should be set by appropriate staff with your involvement and input from your child if possible.

The role of teaching staff and specialists

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and your child's teacher(s) are responsible for preparing the IEP. The SENCO should make sure that all staff working with your child are aware of their IEP and that there is good communication between those supporting them.

Professionals from outside the school, such as a specialist teacher, an educational psychologist or a speech and language therapist, might provide advice to help prepare the IEP. They might also make additional specialist assessments, or be involved in teaching your child directly. When IEPs are developed with the help of specialists, the strategies in the IEP should usually be used, at least in part, in the normal classroom setting.

It will be helpful for you to find out which specialists, if any, will be working with your child.

Further help

- [Our Education Rights Helpline](#)
- [Department of Education](#)

Useful reading

- [Code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs](#). Department of Education (1998).
- [Supplement to the code of practice](#). Department of Education (2005).
- [Special Educational Needs: A guide for Parents](#). Department of Education (1997).

