ASST'S SEND NEWSLETTER

Edition 4



Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of our SEND Newsletter for the 2026/27 academic year. As we begin a new school year, we are delighted to welcome many new children and families to our Trust, alongside those returning for another exciting year.

In this edition, we explore Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), shine our SEND spotlight on autism and share practical advice for supporting children who may experience emotional overwhelm after a busy school day. We hope you find this edition helpful as we continue working together to support every child to thrive.

Autumn 2026/27
Zoe Clancy, SEND Strategic Lead



What is an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

Most children with SEND have their needs met within mainstream schools through SEN Support. This includes adaptations, resources and additional support to help them access learning and make progress. However, some children have needs that require support beyond what is ordinarily available through SEN support and may require an EHCP.

What is an EHCP?

An EHCP is a legal document written by the Local Authority for children and young people aged 0–25. It describes a child's special educational needs, the outcomes they are working towards and the educational provision required to support them, alongside any relevant health and social care provision.

Did You Know?

- A diagnosis is not required to request an EHC needs assessment. Decisions are based on the child's identified needs and the support required.
- Not all children with SEND need an EHCP. Many children make good progress with SEN Support.
- An EHCP does not automatically come with additional funding. Funding decisions are separate from the EHC process.
- EHCPs are reviewed annually to ensure the provision continues to meet the child's needs.

How does a child get an EHCP?

1. Request

Parents/carers or the school can request an EHC Needs Assessment from the Local Authority, which decides whether an assessment is necessary.

2. Assessment

If agreed, information is gathered from the child, parents/carers, school staff and relevant professionals to understand the child's needs.

3. Decision

The Local Authority decides whether an EHCP is needed. Not every assessment results in an EHCP being issued.

SEND SPOTLIGHT: AUTISM

Autism is a lifelong, neurodevelopmental difference and disability that influences how a person communicates, interacts with others and experiences the world. Autistic children may experience differences in social communication, sensory processing, behaviour and the way they think and learn. Autism is described as a spectrum because each individual has their own unique strengths, challenges and support needs.

How Autism May Present in Children

Differences in Communication and Social Interaction: They may communicate and interact differently. They may struggle to understand facial expressions, body language, social rules, often interpreting language literally. Some find conversations, eye contact or developing friendships difficult.

Sensory Processing Differences: Children may be more or less sensitive to sounds, lights, smells, textures or touch. Noisy classrooms, busy lunch halls, certain clothing or food textures may feel overwhelming. Others may seek or avoid sensory experiences, such as movement or pressure.

Preference for Routine and Predictability: Children may prefer familiar routines and clear expectations. Unexpected changes, transitions or unfamiliar situations may cause anxiety or distress. Moving between activities may be particularly challenging.

Focused Interests and Repetitive Behaviours: Children may have intense interests in particular topics, often developing detailed knowledge. They may use repetitive movements or actions, such as rocking, hand-flapping or repeating sounds (stimming), to regulate emotions, manage sensory experiences or express excitement.

Emotional Regulation and Overwhelm: Children may become overwhelmed by sensory demands, social situations or changes to routines. This may result in anxiety, withdrawal, meltdowns or shutdowns. Some may struggle to recognise or communicate emotions.

Masking and Hidden Difficulties: They may hide autistic characteristics to fit in (masking). They may copy peers, suppress behaviours or appear to cope at school despite feeling overwhelmed. This can be exhausting and lead to emotional distress at home.

Autism presents differently in every child, and not all autistic children will display these characteristics.

Autistic Superpowers

Attention to Detail: They may notice small details, patterns or changes that others overlook.

Honest and Genuine: They often communicate honestly and directly, bringing sincerity and authenticity to relationships.

Passionate and Knowledgeable: They may develop deep knowledge and expertise in subjects that interest them.

Creative and Original Thinkers: They may approach problems differently, offering unique ideas and imaginative solutions.

Loyal and Caring: They can form meaningful friendships and show deep care and loyalty to others.

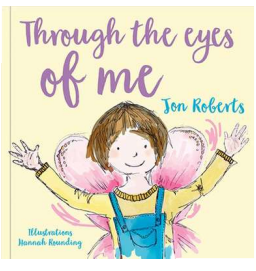
Focused and Determined: They may show exceptional focus, persistence and dedication when pursuing their interests.

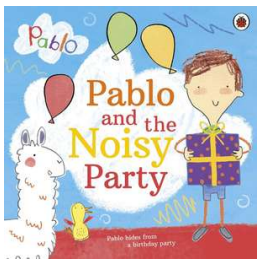
How Can I Help?

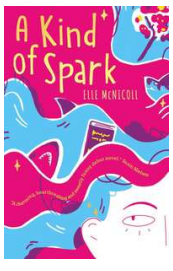
- Use clear, simple language. Allow processing time.
- Keep routines predictable and prepare for changes.
- Respect sensory needs and provide quiet spaces/breaks.
- Stay calm, offer reassurance during overwhelm.
- Celebrate children's interests and strengths.
- Embrace differences and respect individual communication styles.

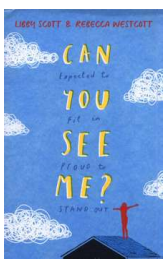
READ MORE

Characters with Autism in Children's Books









After-School Emotional Overwhelm

Some children may appear to cope at school but experience emotional overwhelm when they return home. This can happen when children spend the day managing sensory demands, social interactions and emotions, sometimes hiding their difficulties to fit in (masking).

Once home, these built-up feelings may emerge through tears, anger, meltdowns or withdrawal. This is not simply 'bad behaviour', but may indicate a child is overwhelmed and needs support.

Importantly, this doesn't mean parents or carers are doing anything wrong. Home is often where children feel safest, and where the emotions and pressures they've held in throughout the school day may emerge



Here are some ideas to try:

Allow Time to Unwind: Give your child time and space to relax after school without immediate questions or demands.

Offer Food and Drink: A snack and drink can help children who may be tired, hungry or thirsty after a busy day.

Create a Calm Environment: Reduce noise and distractions, offering calming activities such as drawing, reading, movement or quiet play.

Connect Before Questioning: Offer reassurance without pressure to talk. Once settled, your child may be ready to share their day.

If your child regularly experiences emotional overwhelm after school, speak with their teacher or SENCO to explore whether adjustments during the school day may help.

IPSEA
Independent Parental Special Education Advice

IPSEA provides free, independent and legally based advice to families of children with SEND, helping them understand their rights, request EHC needs assessments, navigate EHCPs, challenge decisions and access support through the SEND Tribunal.
Website: www.ipsea.org.uk

Explore Suffolk: Autism and Nature

Planning a family day out? Discover a free guide designed to help families of autistic children explore Suffolk's countryside. Featuring 24 places to visit, photographs and practical information, it's a useful resource to help parents and carers plan outings and prepare their children for what to expect.



Visit: www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk
Search for: Visiting the Suffolk Countryside

"Every child has the right to thrive, learn, and be celebrated for who they are. Inclusion is not just a policy, it's the heart of everything we do."