

Ordinarily Available Guidance in Merton

Parent and Carers Guide



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Introduction

As a parent or carer, understanding how your child is supported in school or Early Years setting is important—especially if they have additional needs.

This guide explains the Ordinarily Available Provision in Merton known as the **Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG)**: This outlines the support all schools and early years settings are expected to provide for children and young people with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**, without needing an **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)**.

We know that navigating SEND support can sometimes feel overwhelming. This leaflet answers common questions, provides clarity, and shows how you and your child can be part of the process every step of the way.

The aim is to ensure your child receives the right support, at the right time, in the right place—so they can reach their full potential.



1. What does "Ordinarily Available Guidance" mean?

"Ordinarily available guidance" refers to the support that all schools and Early Years settings in Merton are expected to provide for all children, including those with SEND, without the need for an EHCP. This ensures inclusion and support using existing school resources and good teaching practice.

2. Who is this support for?

This support is for all children and young people, including those who have SEND. It ensures that all settings are inclusive and equipped to meet a wide range of needs within their existing resources and expertise.

3. Do I need to apply or request this support formally?

No formal application is needed. Settings are expected to identify needs early and provide the appropriate support as part of their normal inclusive practice.

4. What types of needs are covered by ordinarily available guidance?

Ordinarily available guidance supports a broad range of needs including:

- **Communication and interaction** (e.g. speech and language difficulties, autism)
- **Cognition and learning** (e.g. dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties)
- **Social, emotional, and mental health** (e.g. anxiety, behaviour, ADHD)
- **Sensory and/or physical needs** (e.g. hearing, vision, co-ordination)

Many children's needs cover more than one of these areas. Support is based on need, not diagnosis.

5. What are examples of ordinarily available support?

Examples include:

- Adaptive teaching and learning strategies
- Access to small group interventions
- Visual timetables and structured routines
- Emotional support such as pastoral care or mentoring
- Use of assistive technology
- Flexible seating or movement breaks
- Access to learning aids (e.g. pencil grips, coloured overlays)
- Behaviour support plans

6. Will my child be taken out of class for support?

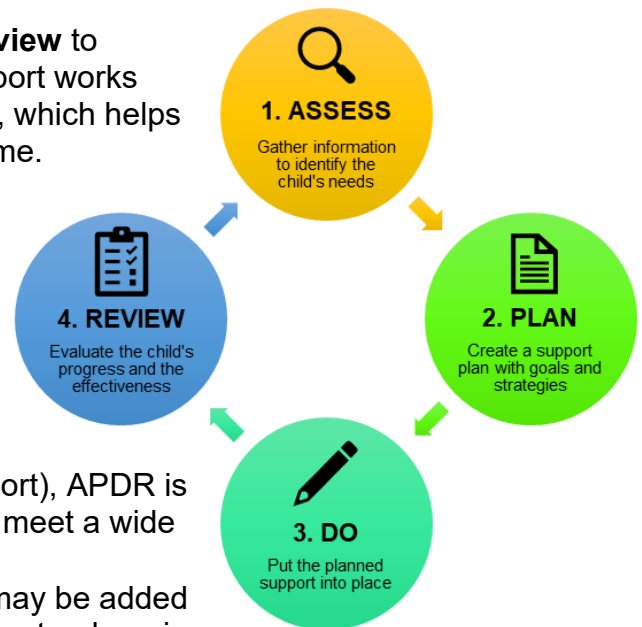
Sometimes support might happen outside the classroom in small groups or individually. However, most support is provided within the classroom through inclusive teaching strategies.

7. How do settings decide what support my child needs?

Settings use a cycle called **Assess – Plan – Do – Review** to understand your child's needs and evaluate what support works best. This process is part of the **graduated response**, which helps ensure that your child gets the right help at the right time.

The Assess – Plan – Do – Review (APDR) cycle helps staff understand your child's needs, plan and put in place support, and then review what is working well and what may need to change. This ensures support is individualised, responsive, and regularly evaluated.

- At the universal level (Ordinarily Available support), APDR is used as part of everyday classroom practice to meet a wide range of learning needs.
- If your child requires more targeted help, they may be added to the SEN register and have an individual support or learning plan, sometimes called a passport.
- Where more specialist input is needed, it also forms the basis of provision within an EHCP.



8. How often does the APDR cycle happen and how am I involved in this process?

This cycle typically takes place **termly**, although it can happen more frequently if needed. The **SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator)** usually leads the process, working closely with class teachers, key workers, and other staff involved in your child's learning.

Throughout the cycle, settings work in **partnership with you and your child**. If your child has identified SEND needs or are on the SEND register you will be invited to 3 review meetings per year where your child's progress is discussed, and you'll have the chance to share your views and contribute to future plans. You should receive updates on what support is in place, what outcomes are being worked towards, and how your child is progressing.

9. Do all settings provide the same level of support?

They are expected to follow the same principles which are set out in Merton's OAG guidance which is set out in 3 documents covering:

- [Early Years Ordinarily Available Guidance](#)
- [Primary Phase Ordinarily Available Guidance](#)
- [Secondary Phase Ordinarily Available Guidance](#)

The specific support may vary based on the setting size, resources, and staff expertise. However, they **must** all meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice. There is no specific Merton post 16 guidance although there is still a statutory requirement to follow the Code of Practice for these settings.



9. How do I know what support my child's setting offers?

Schools must publish a **SEND Information Report** on their website. Early Years setting will have a SEND policy which you can request to see. This outlines how they support pupils with SEND and how parents can be involved.

10. What should I do if I think my child needs extra help?

Speak to your child's class teacher, keyperson or setting **Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) also known as Special Educational Needs Disability Coordinator (SENDCO)**. They can assess your child's needs and decide on appropriate support, including using ordinarily available guidance.

11. Is ordinarily available guidance enough for all children with SEND?

For many children, this level of support is sufficient. If your child needs more the APDR graduated response cycle will be followed as described in question 7.

- At the universal level (Ordinarily Available support), APDR is used as part of everyday classroom practice to meet a wide range of learning needs.
- If your child requires more targeted help, they may be added to the SEN register and have an individual support or learning plan, sometimes called a passport.
- Where more specialist input is needed, it can form the basis of provision within an EHCP.

The setting may work with you to apply for an **Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment**. Parent Carers can complete an EHCNA application, independent of the school, if preferred.

12. Will ordinarily available guidance make my child reliant on support?

No. Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG) is designed to **promote independence**, not dependence. The aim is to give your child the right support at the right time so they can access learning, build confidence, and develop key skills.

Many strategies—such as visual aids, clear instructions, or extra processing time—are part of high-quality teaching and benefit all learners, not just those with SEND.

As your child grows, the level or type of support may change. In some cases, support can be reduced as your child becomes more independent. In others, it may need to be maintained, increased, or adapted—for example, during times of curriculum pressure, transitions between year groups or schools, or when preparing for assessments and exams. The focus is always on meeting your child's individual needs in the most effective way.

13. How is my child's progress monitored?

Settings track all children's progress regularly. For children with SEND, they may use:

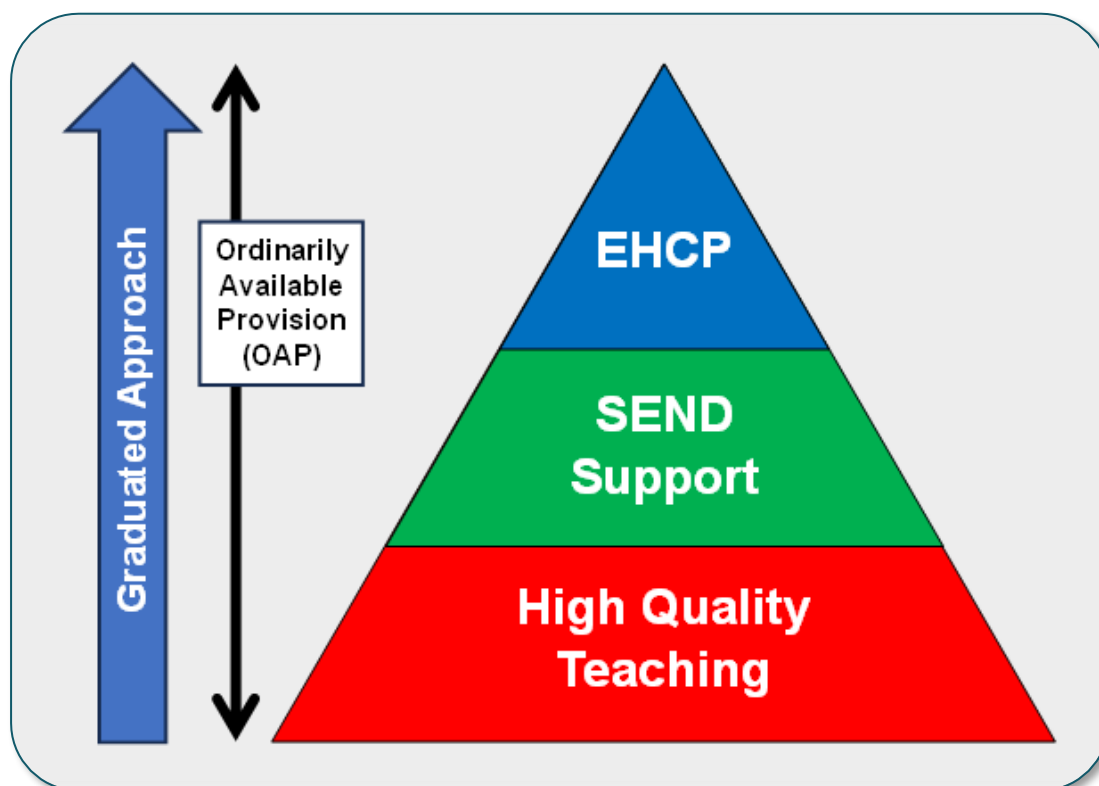
- Individual support or learning plans, (sometimes called passports, SEN support plan, Individual Education Plans, Target sheet).
- Guidance maps
- Provision maps

There should be regular reviews with parents and staff for all children, for those children with SEND on the SEND register these meetings must be held 3 times a year. This ensures teaching and learning support is effective and adjusted as needed.

14. If my child has already been identified as having a SEND, is on the SEND register or has an EHCP, will they also get OAG?

Yes. **Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG)** forms the **foundation of support**, even for children on the SEND register with a support plan / passport or an **EHCP**.

Personalised interventions outlined in the plan will **build on the support already in place**.



5. Will my child's setting have its own approach to Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG), and how will I be kept informed?

Yes. While the local authority provides overall Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG) to support consistency, individual settings may develop their own inclusive practice policies. These reflect the unique needs of their children and how OAG is applied in day-to-day teaching and support.

Settings are encouraged to clearly share this information with parent carers—for example, through welcome packs, websites, newsletters, or parent meetings. You can always ask how OAG is used to support your child's learning and development.

Importantly, settings are also encouraged to involve children, young people, and parent carers in shaping inclusive practices. This could include:

- Opportunities to give feedback
- Participation in parent/carers forums
- Co-production of inclusive strategies
- Regular updates on how support is working

Your insight and experience are a vital part of making sure support is effective, inclusive, and centred on your child's needs.



16. What should I do if I have comments, questions, or concerns about how Ordinarily Available Guidance (OAG) is being used to support my child?

If you have any **comments, queries, or concerns** about your child's support through OAG, it's important to speak up—you are a key partner in their learning journey.

Here's what you can do:

1. **Talk to your child's key person, class teacher**, in the first instance. Most issues can be addressed informally through open communication.
2. If needed, you can **request a meeting** with the SENCo to discuss your concerns in more detail.
3. If you feel your concerns haven't been resolved, you can follow the **setting's complaints procedure**. This is usually available on their website or from the office.

Settings should welcome feedback and view it as an opportunity to improve support for all children. You can also ask how your feedback will be recorded, responded to, and, where appropriate, acted upon.

Remember, you can also seek independent advice or support from your local **Merton Information, Advice and Support Service (MIASS)**

17. Where can I get more information or support as a parent in Merton if I think my child has a SEND?

You can contact:

Your child's setting SENCO

Your child's HV or Doctor

[Merton's Local Offer website](#)



[Merton Information, Advice and Support Service \(MIASS\) for SEND](#) – Free, impartial advice for parents and carers



[Kids First](#)



Additional Resources

[SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years](#)



[SEND: Guide for Parents and Carers](#)



[Merton's Ordinarily Available Guidance \(OAG\) for Early Years, Primary, and Secondary](#)



[EYFS Framework](#)



Glossary

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): The foundation stage begins when children reach the age of three. Many children attend an early education setting soon after their third birthday. The foundation stage continues until the end of the reception year and is consistent with the National Curriculum. It prepares children for learning in Year 1, when programmes of study for Key Stage 1 are taught.

Early years setting: A provider of early education places for children under five years of age. This can include state-funded and private nurseries as well as child minders.

Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan): An EHC plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has SEN or a disability. It is drawn up by the local authority after an EHC needs assessment of the child or young person has determined that an EHC plan is necessary, and after consultation with relevant partner agencies

Graduated approach: A model of action and intervention in early education settings, schools and colleges to help children and young people who have special educational needs. The approach recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs and that, where necessary, increasing specialist expertise should be brought to bear on the difficulties that a child or young person may be experiencing.

Local Offer: Local authorities in England are required to set out in their Local Offer information about provision they expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have **Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans**. Local authorities must consult locally on what provision the Local Offer should contain.

Ordinarily Available (OA) Inclusive Practice / Guidance: Ordinarily Available (OA) inclusive practice, which outlines the baseline expectations for how settings support children with SEND using existing resources. OA practices include differentiated teaching, sensory accommodations, and environmental modifications to ensure inclusivity. Providers are encouraged to consult the OA guidance document for detailed strategies and examples. This approach supports a graduated response model, ensuring all children receive tailored support to thrive in early education environments.

Parent: Under section 576 of the Education Act 1996, the term 'parent' includes any person who is not a parent of the child but has parental responsibility or who cares for the child/ren.

Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND): A child or young person has SEND if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities code of practice (SEND): The Code is applicable to Children and young people from birth to 25 years. It explains the duties of local authorities, health bodies, schools, and colleges to provide for those with special educational needs under part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) also referred to as Special Educational Needs Disability Co-ordinator SENDCO: A qualified teacher in a school or maintained nursery school who has responsibility for co-ordinating SEN provision. In a small school, the headteacher or deputy may take on this role. In larger schools there may be a team of SENCOs. Other early years settings in group provision arrangements are expected to identify an individual to perform the role of SENCO and childminders are encouraged to do so, possibly sharing the role between them where they are registered with an agency.