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# SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY MANUAL

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*for SEN Parents*

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A step-by-step guide to holding schools accountable  
when they fail children with special educational needs.

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By The African Parent

## How to Use This Manual

This manual is not meant to be read linearly.

If you need to send an email today: Go to Section **3**.

If you're building a case: Start with Section **2**.

If school is pushing back: Section **4**.

If you're weeks into this with no progress: Section **5**.

If you need to understand the cultural barriers you're facing: Section **7**.

If you need meeting preparation strategies: Section **8**.

Use what you need when you need it.



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## Introduction

Your child has a diagnosis.

The school knows.

Support still is not happening.

Meetings go in circles.

Emails end with "we'll monitor".

Nothing changes.

Your child falls further behind.

This manual shows you how to act when schools fail to meet their legal duties.

It is not emotional support.

It is not theory.

It is a step-by-step approach grounded in evidence, law, and practice.

This is guidance, not legal advice.

It is designed to help you document, communicate, and escalate effectively within the

**England** education system.



## Section 1: The Three Mistakes Parents Make

### **MISTAKE 1: WAITING FOR THE SCHOOL TO ACT**

Many parents assume schools will respond once a need is identified.

In practice, schools tend to respond faster to documented pressure than informal patience.

Waiting does not protect your child.

It delays support and weakens your position.

Action creates momentum.

Silence does not.

### **MISTAKE 2: LEADING WITH EMOTION IN COMMUNICATION**

Your anger is valid.

Your fear is justified.

But emotional emails are easy to dismiss.

Factual, structured communication is harder to ignore and easier to escalate.

Schools respond to evidence.

They deflect emotion.

This is not about suppressing how you feel.

It is about choosing language that produces outcomes.

### **MISTAKE 3: ACCEPTING VAGUE PROMISES**

“We’ll monitor.”

“We’re keeping an eye on it.”

“We’re doing our best.”

These statements mean nothing without detail.

You need:

- What will change
- Who is responsible
- By when
- How success will be measured

No specifics means no accountability.





## Section 2: Build Your Evidence File

Start today.

You are not collecting complaints.

You are documenting patterns.

One incident is framed as a bad day.

Repeated incidents demonstrate failure to meet need.

### WHAT TO TRACK

Record each issue using this structure:

- Date and time
- What happened (specific and factual)
- Who was involved
- Impact on your child  
Examples: “Refused to eat lunch”, “Missed two hours of learning”, “Came home withdrawn and non-verbal”
- What you reported to the school
- The school’s response (quote exact wording where possible)
- What happened next

### EXAMPLE

Ineffective tracking

“School is not helping with reading.”

Effective tracking

“15/10/24. Teacher reported Kai refuses to read aloud. Kai said peers laugh when he reads. I emailed the SENCO requesting small group reading support. Response: ‘we’re monitoring’.  
22/10/24. No change. Kai still reading alone. Reading age now six months behind.”

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Patterns force response.

Patterns justify escalation.

Patterns protect you if challenged.

Use a spreadsheet, notebook, or document.

Date everything.

See **Appendix B** for a ready-to-use tracking template.



## Section 3: The Email That Gets Action

Do not send informal requests once concerns are ongoing.

Use a formal structure.

### SUBJECT LINE

**Formal request for [specific support] – [Child's name], Year [X]**

### PARAGRAPH 1: STATE THE ISSUE

“I am writing to formally request [specific support] for my child [name], who has a diagnosis of [condition] confirmed by [professional] on [date].”

### PARAGRAPH 2: PRESENT EVIDENCE

“Despite this diagnosis, adequate support is not currently in place. Examples include:

- [Date]: [What happened]
- [Date]: [What happened]
- [Date]: [What happened]”

Keep this factual.

Do not explain emotions.

### PARAGRAPH 3: REFERENCE LEGAL DUTY

“Under the SEND Code of Practice 2015, schools must use their best endeavours to meet the needs of children with SEN.

Under the Equality Act 2010, schools must make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.”

### PARAGRAPH 4: STATE WHAT YOU WANT

“I am requesting:



- [Specific adjustment] to be implemented by [date]
- [Specific support] to be confirmed in writing by [date]
- A meeting within ten working days to agree an implementation plan”

## PARAGRAPH 5: SET NEXT STEPS

“Please confirm receipt and provide a written response within ten working days.

If adequate support is not put in place, I will escalate this matter to the Headteacher, school governors, and the Local Authority.”

Sign off formally.

Copy the SENCO, Headteacher, and governors.

*Visibility creates movement.*

## EXAMPLE YOU CAN ADAPT

**Subject:** Formal request for reasonable adjustments -Amara Johnson, Year 4

Dear Ms. Patterson,

I am writing to formally request reasonable adjustments for my daughter, Amara Johnson, who has a diagnosis of ADHD (combined type) confirmed by Dr. Sarah Williams, Consultant Paediatrician, on 12 September 2024.

Despite this diagnosis, adequate support is not currently in place. Examples include:

- 2 October 2024: Amara was sent out of class three times for “not sitting still”. Her need for movement breaks was not accommodated.
- 9 October 2024: Amara missed breaktime as punishment for incomplete work. Children with ADHD often require additional time for task completion and support with executive functioning.
- 16 October 2024: I emailed requesting a movement break system and fidget tools. Response received: “we’re monitoring the situation”. No adjustments were implemented.





Under the SEND Code of Practice 2015, schools must use their best endeavours to meet the needs of children with SEN. Under the Equality Act 2010, schools must make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

I am requesting:

- Movement breaks every 45 minutes to be implemented by 30 October 2024
- Access to fidget tools during lessons, confirmed in writing by 25 October 2024
- A meeting within ten working days to agree a detailed SEN Support Plan with specific, measurable targets

Please confirm receipt and provide a written response within ten working days.

If adequate support is not put in place, I will escalate this matter to the Headteacher, school governors, and the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Johnson

Cc: Mr. David Thompson (Headteacher), Mrs. Claire Roberts (Class Teacher), Mr. James Mitchell (Chair of Governors)

See **Appendix A** for additional sample emails.



## Section 4: When the School Pushes Back

Do not argue.  
State facts.  
Quote duty.  
Request written responses.

### **“WE DON’T HAVE THE RESOURCES”**

Your response:

“I understand schools face resource pressures. However, resource pressure does not remove your legal duties.  
Please confirm what reasonable adjustments can be implemented now using current resources, and what interim support will be put in place while additional support is explored.  
Please confirm this in writing.”

### **“WE’RE ALREADY DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN”**

Your response:

“My evidence shows my child is still struggling.  
What specific outcomes are being measured, and what progress data supports your position?  
Let’s review progress data and the SEN Support Plan targets together.”

### **“THEY NEED TO LEARN TO COPE”**

Your response:

“My child has a disability-related need. Expecting them to cope without adjustments creates a barrier to education.  
What reasonable adjustments will you implement, and by what date?”

### **“WE CAN’T DO THIS WITHOUT AN EHCP”**

Your response:

“SEN support and reasonable adjustments should be in place regardless of EHCP status.  
What support will you provide while assessment is pursued?”

### **“IT’S A PARENTING ISSUE, NOT A SCHOOL ISSUE”**

Your response:



“My child has a formal diagnosis from [professional]. This is a recognised educational need. What reasonable adjustments will you make in school to remove barriers to learning?”

**“WE NEED MORE TIME TO MONITOR”**

Your response:

“My child has been monitored since [date]. That is [X] months without adequate support. What specific support will you implement by [date]?”

**“ALL CHILDREN STRUGGLE SOMETIMES”**

Your response:

“My child has a diagnosed condition that creates specific barriers to learning. This is not typical struggle. What reasonable adjustments will you make?”

**“THEY’RE FINE AT SCHOOL, IT MUST BE HOME”**

Your response:

“Many children with SEN mask at school and show distress at home due to exhaustion. What school-based support will you put in place to reduce these barriers?”

**“WE CAN’T PUT THAT IN WRITING”**

Your response:

“I need written confirmation to ensure accountability and shared understanding. If you are refusing to document agreed support, please explain the reason in writing.”



## Section 5: The Escalation Pathway

Think in phases, not weeks.

### PHASE 1: INITIAL ACTION

Formal email to SENCO and class teacher.

Specific requests.

Document response.

Timeline: Request a written response within 10 working days.

### PHASE 2: FORMAL ESCALATION

Written complaint to Headteacher using the school's published complaints procedure.

Reference your original email, evidence, and lack of adequate response.

Timeline: Follow the timescales in the school's complaints procedure. Quote their own stated timeframes.

### PHASE 3: GOVERNANCE INVOLVEMENT

Escalate to school governors if action remains inadequate.

Request the complaint be reviewed at governing level, in line with procedure.

Timeline: Follow the timescales in the complaints procedure.

### PHASE 4: EXTERNAL ROUTES

Contact the Local Authority SEN team.

Seek specialist advice through IPSEA.

Consider Ombudsman routes (if appropriate) and Equality Act routes where discrimination is an issue.

### AT EVERY STAGE

Record:



- What you asked for
- What was promised
- What actually happened

## **PARALLEL ACTION: EHCP NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Request an EHCP needs assessment if your child's needs are not being met through SEN support alone.

Do not wait for the school to suggest it.

You can request assessment directly from your Local Authority.

England timelines:

- The Local Authority must decide within 6 weeks whether to assess.
- If they assess, the full EHCP process should complete within 20 weeks (with limited exceptions).



## Section 6: Red Flags Decision Table

Use this section when you need to decide fast.

Red flag you hear	What it usually means	Immediate move (do this next)
“They just need to try harder”	Need is being denied or reframed as effort	Email: restate diagnosis and barriers. Request specific support with dates. If refused, escalate in writing.
“We can’t do anything without a diagnosis”	Gatekeeping support incorrectly	Email: SEN support is based on need. Request interim support now while evidence is gathered. Ask for their refusal in writing.
“We don’t have funding/resources”	Avoidance of duty or delay	Email: ask what reasonable adjustments can happen now and what interim plan starts this week. Request written response.
“All children struggle sometimes”	Minimising disability-related barriers	Email: restate diagnosis, give two evidence examples, request adjustments with deadlines.
“We’re monitoring” (beyond a short period)	Indefinite delay with no intervention	Email: state how long monitoring has happened. Demand actions, dates, and review cycle. Escalate if vague.
“They’re fine at school, it’s home”	Masking not understood, responsibility deflected	Email: state that masking is common. Request school observations, data, and proactive support.
“We can’t put that in writing”	Avoiding accountability	Send your own meeting summary within 24 hours. Ask them to correct within 48 hours. Escalate if they refuse.
“Other parents don’t complain”	Social pressure to silence you	Email: state other parents are irrelevant. Return to legal duty and your child’s needs.
“You’re being too demanding”	Character attack to make you back down	Reply: “Please focus on the requested adjustments and timelines.” Keep it factual. Escalate.
“If you’re not happy, move schools”	Trying to push your child out	Reply in writing: your child has the right to education with support. Escalate to governors/LA.





## Section 7: The Cultural Dimension

You may face additional barriers.

### **“CHALLENGING SCHOOL IS DISRESPECTFUL”**

Your family might say challenging school is disrespectful.

In the England system, it is not.

Schools have legal duties.

You are using the system as designed.

You can say: “I respect teachers. That’s why I’m working with them to get the right support for my child.”

### **“IT’S JUST CULTURAL DIFFERENCES”**

Schools may dismiss your concerns as cultural differences.

This can be a racialised deflection that sidelines legal duties.

Respond in writing: “My child has a formal diagnosis. This is not a cultural expectation. This is a legal requirement under UK law.”

### **UNDER-IDENTIFICATION AND OVER-PUNISHMENT**

Black children are often under-identified for learning needs and over-represented in behaviour sanctions.

This pattern shows up in classrooms and exclusions.

Schools may:

- Attribute learning difficulties to laziness rather than investigate need
- Interpret SEN behaviours as defiance
- Punish what should be supported

Bring professional documentation where possible.

Unfair as it is, some schools take external reports more seriously.

Reports that carry weight:

- Educational psychologist
- Paediatrician or child psychiatrist
- Speech and language therapist



- Occupational therapist

## THE “ANGRY BLACK PARENT” STEREOTYPE

Schools may characterise advocacy as aggression.  
That can be used to silence you.

Protect yourself by:

- Keeping communication in writing
- Using formal, factual language
- Bringing a witness to meetings
- Recording for accuracy where appropriate

If a school labels you “aggressive” while you are communicating calmly, respond in writing:  
“I am advocating for my child’s education. Please specify what I have said or done that you consider inappropriate, with dates and examples.”

## COMMUNITY PRESSURE

Church or community may expect you to stay quiet.  
They may call advocacy “causing trouble”.

Your child’s education cannot wait for other people’s comfort.

If pressed: “I’m doing what’s best for my child. I hope you can support that.”

## ISOLATION

You may be the only parent who looks like you in the room.

Find your people. Online counts.

Search:

- “[your area] Black parents support group”
- “[your area] parent carer forum”
- “[your area] SEND parents support”



## Section 8: Meeting Preparation and Conduct

Schools often use meetings to make verbal promises that never materialise.

Protect yourself.

### BEFORE THE MEETING

Request agenda and attendees in advance

Email: “Please send the meeting agenda and list of attendees by [date].”

Prepare three key points

Maximum three points per meeting.

Write them down. Say them clearly.

Bring a support person

Parent, friend, advocate, independent supporter.

Tell the school: “I will be bringing [name] to support me.”

Schools should allow this. If they object, ask for the reason in writing.

Print your evidence

Do not rely on the school having it.

Know what you’re asking for

Not “more support”.

Ask for specific support with frequency, start date, and owner.

### DURING THE MEETING

Take notes or record for accuracy

Ask: “I’d like to record this meeting for accuracy. Is that acceptable?”

If they refuse: “I will take detailed notes. Please speak slowly enough for me to capture what’s said.”

Do not share recordings publicly.

Stop jargon

“Explain that in plain English.”

Force clarity

“What exactly will happen, by when, and who is responsible?”



Summarise before you leave

“So we’ve agreed [action] by [date], delivered by [person]. I’ll email to confirm today.”

## AFTER THE MEETING

Send your summary within 24 hours

Subject: Meeting summary - [Child’s name] - [Date]

List:

- Agreed actions
- Responsible person
- Deadline
- Review date

Add:

“If this summary is inaccurate, please respond within 48 hours with corrections. If I do not hear from you, I will assume this summary is accurate.”

Then diarise every deadline.

Follow up on missed actions immediately



## Section 9: Protect Yourself Strategically

This process is exhausting.

Burnout leads to poor communication.

Poor communication weakens cases.

Protecting yourself is strategic.

### PRACTICAL STEPS

- Find one SEN parent you can speak to without explaining everything
- Limit weekly advocacy time. Decide your ceiling and stick to it
- Keep one folder for all school communications
- Take breaks between escalation stages. Do not spiral between deadlines

### WHAT NOT TO DO

- Do not vent about the school on public social media
- Do not badmouth the school to your child
- Do not expect extended family to understand. Find people who do

### WHEN YOU NEED EXPERT HELP

Use the Support Directory in **Appendix G**.



## Conclusion

Schools should meet your child's needs without resistance.

Often, they do not.

You now know:

- How to build evidence that forces response
- What to write that schools cannot dismiss
- When to escalate and how to do it effectively
- How to run meetings that produce written commitments
- How to protect yourself while pushing

You should not have to become an expert in SEN law to secure basic support.

But now you know how.

That shifts the balance of power.





## Glossary of Terms

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

SENCO: Special Educational Needs Coordinator

EHCP: Education, Health and Care Plan

SEN Support: School-based support without EHCP

Reasonable Adjustments: Changes schools must make under Equality Act 2010

Best Endeavours: Duty under SEND Code of Practice to do what is reasonable to meet SEN

Graduated Approach: Assess, Plan, Do, Review

Local Authority (LA): Council education department responsible for EHCP processes

Masking: Suppressing needs at school, then distress at home

Meltdown: Overwhelm response, not a tantrum

Executive Function: Skills for planning, memory, self-control

Provision Map: School document detailing interventions, frequency, and delivery



## Appendix A: Sample Emails

### Sample 1: Initial request for SEN support

Subject: Formal request for SEN support - [Child's name], Year [X]

Dear [SENCO name],

I am writing to formally request SEN support for my child, [full name], in Year [X], class [teacher name].

My child has a diagnosis of [condition], confirmed by [professional name and title] on [date]. A copy of the report is attached.

Despite this, adequate support is not currently in place. Examples include:

- [Date]: [What happened]
- [Date]: [What happened]
- [Date]: [What happened]

Under the SEND Code of Practice 2015, the school must use best endeavours to meet the needs of children with SEN. Under the Equality Act 2010, the school must make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

I am requesting:

- [Specific support] implemented by [date]
- [Specific adjustment] confirmed in writing by [date]
- A meeting within ten working days to agree a clear SEN Support Plan with measurable targets

Please confirm receipt and provide a written response within ten working days.

If adequate support is not put in place, I will escalate this matter to the Headteacher, governors, and the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,  
[Your name]

Cc: [Headteacher], [Class teacher], [Chair of Governors]



## Sample 2: Escalation to Headteacher under complaints procedure

Subject: Formal complaint - Failure to provide adequate SEN support for [Child's name],  
Year [X]

Dear [Headteacher name],

I am making a formal complaint under the school's published complaints procedure.

On [date], I formally requested SEN support for my child, [full name], diagnosed with [condition]. My original email is attached.

The response has been inadequate:

- [Date]: [School response and issue]
- [Date]: [School response and issue]
- [Date]: [School response and issue]

Impact on my child:

- [Impact 1]
- [Impact 2]
- [Impact 3]

This raises concerns about the school meeting its duties under the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and Equality Act 2010.

I am requesting:

- [Action 1 with deadline]
- [Action 2 with deadline]
- A meeting within [X] working days in line with the complaints procedure

Please confirm receipt and respond within the timescales stated in the school's complaints procedure.

Yours sincerely,  
[Your name]

Cc: [Chair of Governors]



### Sample 3: Request for EHC needs assessment (Local Authority)

Subject: Formal request for EHC needs assessment - [Child's name], DOB [date]

Dear [Local Authority SEN team],

I am formally requesting an Education, Health and Care needs assessment for my child:

- Full name: [name]
- Date of birth: [DOB]
- School: [school]
- Diagnosis: [condition], confirmed by [professional] on [date]

Despite SEN support since [date], my child continues to face significant barriers to learning. Evidence includes:

- Attainment/progress data showing [details]
- Professional reports (attached) from [list]
- SEN Support Plans showing limited progress (attached)
- Evidence log documenting repeated incidents (attached)

Under section 36(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014, I am requesting you assess whether my child requires provision through an EHCP.

Please confirm receipt and provide your decision within six weeks as required.

Yours sincerely,  
[Your name]

Cc: [School SENCO], [Headteacher]

### Sample 4: Response to “We don’t have resources”

Subject: Re: SEN support for [Child's name] Interim plan required

Dear [name],

Thank you for your email dated [date].

You stated the school cannot provide [support] due to resource pressure.



I understand resource pressures. However, the school still has duties under the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and Equality Act 2010.

Please confirm in writing:

- What reasonable adjustments can be implemented now using current resources
- What interim support will begin this week
- What the review date will be and what progress measures will be used

Please respond within five working days.

Yours sincerely,  
[Your name]

Cc: [Headteacher], [Chair of Governors]

### Sample 5: Meeting summary email

Subject: Meeting summary [Child's name] SEN support [Date]

Dear [attendees],

Thank you for meeting on [date] to discuss SEN support for my child, [name].

This email confirms the agreed actions:

1. [Action]
  - Delivered by: [name/role]
  - Frequency: [x]
  - Start date: [date]
  - Review date: [date]
2. [Action]
  - Delivered by: [name/role]
  - Deadline: [date]

If this summary is inaccurate, please respond within 48 hours with corrections. If I do not hear from you, I will assume this summary is accurate.

Yours sincerely,  
[Your name]



## Appendix B: Evidence Tracking Template

Use this template in a spreadsheet or document. Date every entry.

Date	Incident / Issue	People Involved	Impact on Child	Reported To	School Response	Follow-up Action	Outcome
15/10/24	Teacher reported child refuses to read aloud in class	Class teacher, child	Child told me peers laugh when they read. Child now anxious about reading.	Emailed SENCO requesting small group reading support	SENCO replied "we're monitoring"	Followed up 22/10/24	No change implemented
22/10/24	Child still reading alone. Reading age assessment shows 6 months behind	Class teacher, SENCO	Child's reading gap widening. Confidence decreasing.	Requested meeting with SENCO	Meeting scheduled for 5/11/24	Attend meeting	Awaiting outcome
5/11/24	Meeting held. SENCO agreed to small group support "when resources available"	SENCO, class teacher, me	No immediate support. Child continues to fall behind.	Asked for specific start date in writing	No written response received	Chased by email 12/11/24	Still no response
12/11/24	Chased SENCO for written confirmation of start date	SENCO	Child now 7 months behind in reading. Refusing to do reading homework.	Follow-up email sent	SENCO replied "still working on it"	Escalating to Headteacher	Formal complaint drafted

Tips for effective tracking:





- Be specific about dates and times
- Use factual language, not emotional language
- Record the impact on your child (learning loss, emotional impact, behaviour changes)
- Note who you reported to and when
- Record exact responses from school (quote emails where possible)
- Track follow-up actions and outcomes
- Keep this updated weekly
- Note the growing gap between need and provision

What this tracking proves:

- Pattern of unmet need over time
- You have consistently raised concerns
- School has failed to act adequately
- Your child's needs are increasing without support
- You have followed appropriate channels before escalating

This evidence is essential for:

- Formal complaints
- EHC assessment requests
- Governor appeals
- Ombudsman complaints
- Legal routes if necessary

Additional columns you might add:

- Witnesses present
- Documents provided to school
- School's stated reason for inaction
- External professional input
- Days of school missed due to this issue



## Appendix C: Key Legislation Quick Reference (England)

### SEND CODE OF PRACTICE 2015

What it is:

Statutory guidance that schools and Local Authorities must follow when supporting children with SEN.

Key sections parents need:

Section 1.19: Schools must use their "best endeavours" to meet the needs of children with SEN.

Section 5.36: SEN support should be implemented immediately when need is identified. You do not need to wait for diagnosis.

Section 6.63: Schools should involve parents in all decisions about SEN support.

Section 9.2: Local Authorities must assess a child for an EHCP if the child has (or may have) SEN and may need provision through an EHCP.

Section 9.14: Local Authorities must decide within six weeks whether to assess. If they decide to assess, the full process must complete within 20 weeks.

How to cite it:

"Under section 5.36 of the SEND Code of Practice 2015, SEN support should be in place now, not after further monitoring."

Full document: Search "SEND Code of Practice 2015" or visit: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

### EQUALITY ACT 2010

What it is:

Law that protects people with disabilities from discrimination.

Key sections parents need:

Section 6: Definition of disability. A child with diagnosed SEN usually meets this definition.



Section 20: Schools must make "reasonable adjustments" for disabled pupils.

Section 85: It is unlawful for schools to discriminate against disabled pupils in admissions, education, or exclusions.

What "reasonable adjustments" means:

Schools must change their policies, practices, or physical features to remove barriers for disabled pupils.

Examples:

- Providing extra time
- Allowing movement breaks
- Providing alternative seating
- Adjusting teaching methods
- Providing visual schedules or written instructions
- Allowing use of fidget tools
- Modifying expectations for handwriting if child has dyspraxia
- Providing quiet space for sensory breaks

What is not a defence:

- "We don't have resources" is not a valid reason to refuse adjustments
- "It's not in our policy" - policies must change to accommodate disabled pupils
- "Other children don't get this" - that's the point of adjustments
- "It's not fair to other children" - equality means treating children according to their needs

How to cite it: "Under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010, the school must make reasonable adjustments. Failure to do so constitutes discrimination."

**Full document:** Search "Equality Act 2010" or visit: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

## **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACT 2014**

What it is:

Law that created the current EHCP system, replacing the old "statement" system.

Key sections parents need:



Section 19: Local Authorities must keep SEN provision under review and involve parents.

Section 36: Parents can request an EHC needs assessment at any time.

Section 37: Local Authorities must decide within six weeks whether to assess.

Section 42: If a child has an EHCP, the Local Authority must ensure the provision specified in it is delivered.

Parent's right to appeal:

If Local Authority refuses to assess, you can appeal to SEN tribunal.

If Local Authority assesses but refuses EHCP, you can appeal.

If you disagree with content of EHCP, you can appeal.

If you disagree with school named in EHCP, you can appeal.

Appeals are free. IPSEA can support you.

How to cite it:

"Under section 36 of the Children and Families Act 2014, I am formally requesting an EHC needs assessment for my child."

**Full document:** Search "Children and Families Act 2014" or visit: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)



## Appendix D: Meeting Preparation Checklist

Print this and bring it to every school meeting.

### Before the meeting

- Requested agenda in advance (at least 3 days before)
- Requested list of attendees in advance
- Prepared my three key points in writing
- Practiced saying my key points clearly in under 2 minutes
- Arranged support person to attend with me
- Informed school that support person will attend
- Printed my evidence tracker
- Printed diagnostic reports
- Printed relevant emails with school
- Printed examples of my child's work showing difficulties
- Written down what specific outcome I'm asking for
- Eaten something (clear thinking requires fuel)
- Brought water
- Brought notebook and pen
- Fully charged phone (for recording if needed)

### WHAT TO BRING TO THE MEETING

- This checklist
- Evidence tracker
- All diagnostic reports
- Previous correspondence with school
- Examples of your child's work
- Notebook and multiple pens
- Water
- Support person

### DURING THE MEETING



- Introduced my support person and their role
- Asked if I can record (or stated I will take detailed notes)
- Took notes throughout (or support person took notes)
- Asked for clarification when jargon was used
- Stated my three key points clearly
- Stayed calm and factual (even if upset)
- Refused to accept vague promises
- Asked "what specifically, by when, by whom?" for all commitments
- Summarised agreed actions before leaving
- Got confirmation from attendees that summary is accurate
- Agreed date for next meeting
- Did not agree to anything I'm uncomfortable with

### **IF I FELT OVERWHELMED**

- Asked for a break
- Said "I need time to process this, let's reconvene next week"
- Refused to be rushed into decisions

### **AFTER THE MEETING**

1. Sent email summary within 24 hours
2. Listed all agreed actions with deadlines and responsible people
3. Stated that silence = agreement with my summary
4. Diarised all deadlines to check if actions are completed
5. Updated my evidence tracker with meeting outcomes
6. Checked in with my support person about what they observed
7. Practiced self-care (this is exhausting work)

### **IF COMMITMENTS AREN'T MET**

- On deadline date, sent follow-up email noting action not completed
- Requested new deadline (maximum one week)
- Stated that if not completed, I will escalate





- Followed through on escalation if necessary

## **RED FLAGS DURING MEETING**

If any of these happen, consider ending the meeting and escalating:

- Being repeatedly spoken over or interrupted
- Being told I'm "too emotional" or "aggressive" when speaking calmly
- Multiple people speaking at once, talking over me
- Decisions being made without my input
- Being told "this is just how it is, nothing we can do"
- Feeling intimidated or ganged up on
- Being pressured to agree to things I'm not comfortable with
- School refusing to put agreements in writing

## **IF MEETING GOES BADLY**

What I said:

"This meeting is not productive. I'm leaving now. I will put my concerns in writing and request a new meeting with different attendees."

Then I left. I do not have to stay in meetings where I'm not being heard.



## Appendix E: School Contact Map (Who to Email and When)

Use this to avoid wasted weeks.

### **CLASS TEACHER**

- First-line concerns in lessons, behaviour, day-to-day barriers
- Ask for: specific observations, what support is being tried, what data exists

### **SENCO**

- SEN Support Plan, interventions, graduated approach, coordination
- Ask for: provision map, targets, review dates, adjustments list

### **HEADTEACHER**

- When SENCO response is inadequate or delayed
- When behaviour sanctions or exclusions are involved
- When you need formal accountability

### **DSL (DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD)**

- If distress, self-harm risk, severe anxiety, bullying, unsafe handling, restraint concerns

### **CHAIR OF GOVERNORS / GOVERNANCE PROFESSIONAL**

- Formal complaint escalation
- Process oversight and governance accountability

### **TRUST/ACADEMY CHAIN CENTRAL TEAM (IF APPLICABLE)**

- If complaints procedure includes a trust stage
- If school-level resolution fails

### **LOCAL AUTHORITY SEN TEAM**

- EHC needs assessment request
- LA duty oversight where school cannot meet needs



## Appendix F: SEN support plan quality check

A plan is weak if it is vague.

Use this checklist. If it fails, send it back.

A quality SEN Support Plan must include:

- Clear needs statement based on evidence
- Targets that are measurable
- Named interventions (not “support as needed”)
- Frequency and duration (how often, how long)
- Delivery owner (role or named staff)
- Start date and review date
- Success measures (what data will prove progress)
- Adjustments list shared with relevant staff
- Graduated approach cycle: Assess, Plan, Do, Review
- Parent input included and recorded

If any are missing, reply in writing: “Please revise the plan to include measurable targets, named interventions, frequency, delivery owner, and review dates.”



## Appendix G: Support directory

### **SEN AND DISABILITY RIGHTS HANDBOOK (IPSEA)**

free SEN legal information and tribunal guidance. use for: refusals, EHCP issues, legal wording. free download from [www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk) updated annually.

### **EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (EHRC) GUIDANCE**

Guidance on reasonable adjustments in schools.

Search: "EHRC reasonable adjustments schools"

Provides examples and case studies.

### **SOS!SEN**

Parent-led support and advocacy. Use for: practical escalation advice and community support.

### **CONTACT**

Support for families of disabled children. Use for: education guidance, benefits, and family support.

### **NATIONAL NETWORK OF PARENT CARER FORUMS (NNPCF)**

Find your local parent carer forum. Use for: local system knowledge, training, collective voice.

### **LOCAL AUTHORITY "LOCAL OFFER"**

Every Local Authority must publish their "Local Offer" showing SEN services available.

This includes:

- How to request EHC assessment
- What support is available
- How to make complaints
- Parent support services

Search: "[your council name] local offer"

### **SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES**

Every school must have a published complaints procedure.

Usually available on school website under "Policies" or "Information".

Follow this procedure exactly when making formal complaints.



## ABOUT THE AFRICAN PARENT

The African Parent supports first-generation parents navigating UK systems while preserving cultural heritage.

We provide practical tools, advocacy guidance, and community connection for parents raising children across cultures.

For personalised support with your child's school advocacy, book a consultation at: [Discovery call](#)

Join our community at: [Parent Circle](#)

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## VERSION HISTORY

Version 1.0 - January 2026 - Initial release

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## LEGAL DISCLAIMER

This manual provides guidance based on UK law and practice. It is not legal advice.

For specific legal advice about your situation, contact IPSEA (free SEN legal advice) or a solicitor specialising in education law.

The author and The African Parent accept no liability for outcomes resulting from use of this manual.

Parents use this information at their own discretion.

Laws and guidance may change after publication. Check current legislation and statutory guidance when using this manual.

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