

Supporting Children's Learning

All children and young people in Scotland are entitled to help to get the most out of school

Some children, for all sorts of different reasons, might need extra support during their education. This leaflet explains what additional support for learning is and how you can make sure your child gets the right support.

What is additional support for learning?

'Additional support for learning' means giving young people extra help so they can get the most out of school. A young person is said to have 'additional support needs' if they need more help (or a different kind of help) to what is normally provided in schools to children of the same age.

It doesn't just apply to children who have long-term learning difficulties or disabilities. Children can need support for many reasons. Some may need a lot of support all the way through school. Others will only need a small amount for a short time.

Key information

Understanding how education and support are provided can help you work with your school to ensure your child gets the most from their learning. There are a few important pieces of information it's good to know about:

- Scotland's schools follow the Curriculum for Excellence, which covers learning from the ages of 3 to 18. It aims to give young people the skills to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.
- In Scotland school staff and other professionals who work with children and young people work to a set of principles called Getting It Right For Every Child. This way of working ensures that all children have the chance to grow up healthy and happy. A child's wellbeing is measured using eight indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (see overleaf). Providing additional support for learning is one of the ways to ensure all children can take part in the life of their school and be ready to succeed.
- In Scotland there is a presumption that children will be educated in their local mainstream school unless certain exceptions apply. Parents have the right to ask for their child to be educated in a different school of their choice.
- Just as in every other part of life in Scotland, it is against the law for schools to discriminate because of someone's disability, gender (or gender reassignment), race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or because of pregnancy or maternity. Children are just as diverse as adults, and the law says that schools must be able to cope with that diversity with flexible solutions.
- In other words, barriers that stop a child from learning, taking part and achieving must be overcome. Every child must be included, so that everyone gets a high-quality education. The right to additional support for learning is set out in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004 as amended. You can find out more about the legal framework at www.enquire.org.uk



Why might a child need additional support for learning?

There are many reasons why a child might need additional support for learning. It could stem from an issue at home that affects their ability to get the most from school, such as a change in their family circumstances, or an issue in school such as struggling to cope with a noisy classroom. It could be due to disability or health reasons, or social and emotional factors. Below are some examples. What is important is that, whatever the reason, the pupil's needs should be identified, provided for and reviewed by the education authority. This support should be tailored to the individual child or young person.



It is not possible to list all the reasons because it will depend on the child. Children are affected by things in different ways – one child who has lost a family member may struggle at school but another will not.

Your child might need support for a short time, or if their needs are more complicated they might need help for longer.

How will I know if my child needs additional learning support?

Teachers are constantly assessing their pupils and checking how well they are learning. It is an ongoing process of gathering information. But teachers are looking at other things too, such as how the children behave in lessons and how they get on with their classmates. The teacher will tell you if they have concerns about how well your child is doing.

- They may have noticed that your daughter or son is having trouble with reading or spelling, or that they are struggling to keep up with lessons.
- Perhaps your child is struggling to cope in the classroom or they are finding it hard to interact with their classmates.
- A GP or other medical professional may have spotted a health problem.
- The school may be worried if your child is late or absent from school a lot.

If any of these things happen, the school may ask an education specialist or partner (such as health, social work or other agencies) to observe your child to see if any extra help is needed. The school should get in touch with you to discuss what can be done to give your child the support they need.

What do I do if I think my child needs additional learning support?

The first thing to do is have a chat with your child's class teacher. Don't wait till parents' evening. Make an appointment so you can discuss your concerns.

- It could be that you know something is making learning difficult for your child. Perhaps they have a health problem, or there is something going on at home.
- Or maybe you have noticed they are having trouble with their friends or their homework but you don't know what is causing it.
- The teacher should be able to suggest ways the school can help your child.
- You could also discuss the matter with a senior member of staff, such as the headteacher, if you still have worries after speaking to the class teacher.

What does additional learning support look like? It depends on what sort of help your child needs.

- There are lots of ways to provide support in school, such as the teacher adapting the teaching materials or the way they teach, using specialist IT equipment, giving extra time to finish work, allowing the child to have a break from sitting down, and getting help from a classroom assistant.
- Sometimes it might be necessary to call on the services of an educational psychologist or a visiting teacher to get specialist help.
- Physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists can be brought in to help with particular issues.
- Most schools have a plan of action to deal with common problems.
- Some children with additional support needs may require an individual educational programme to support their learning.
- If there are multiple or complex issues that will need significant support over a long period (more than a year), social workers and medical professionals could be involved, and a co-ordinated support plan (CSP) might be put together to ensure your child gets the right help at the right time.

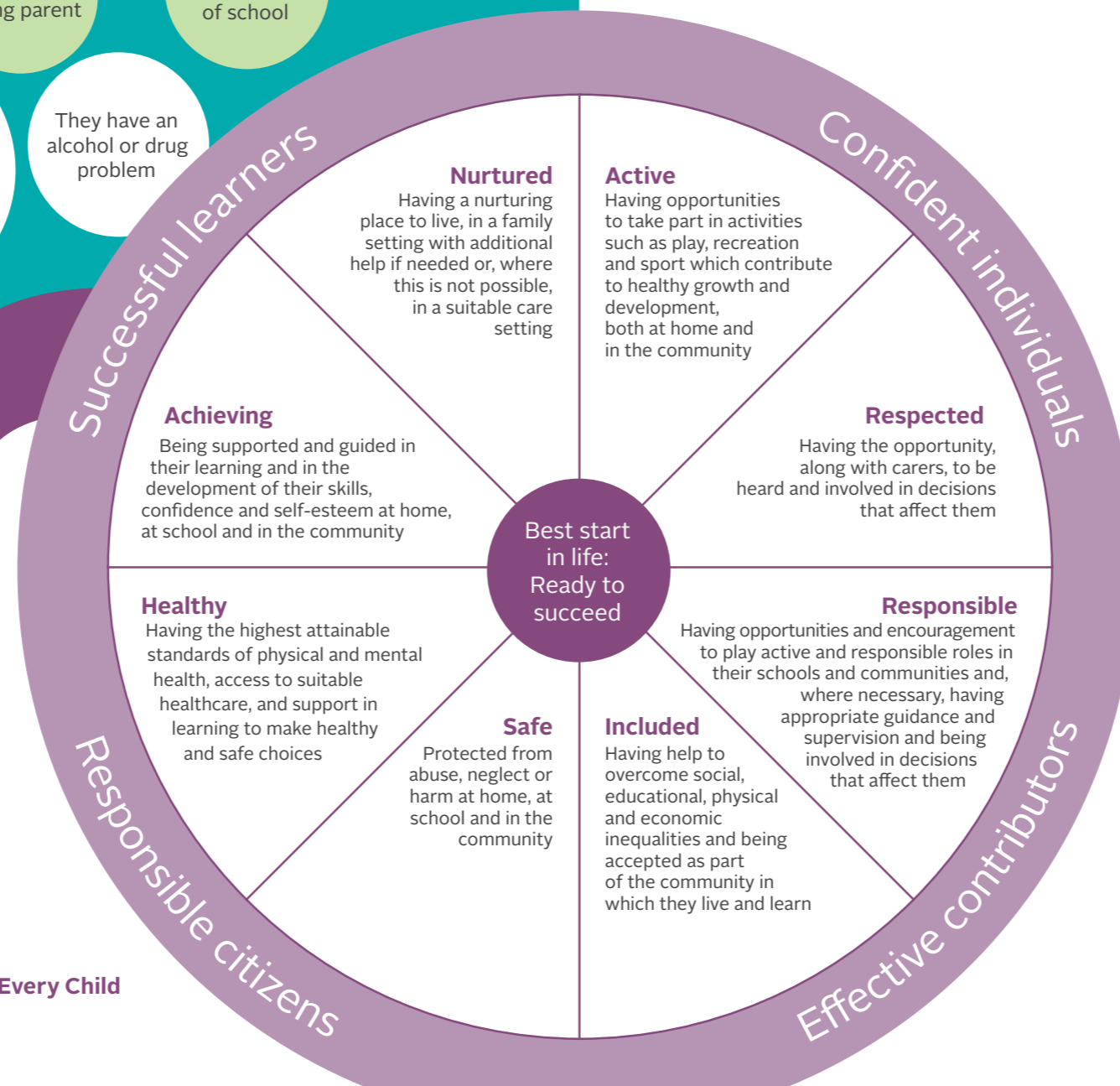
Will I be involved in this?

Yes. Help from parents is very valuable.

You will have the opportunity to be involved in discussions and decisions about your child's learning. You have a key role to play in their education. The school and the education authority will be keen to work closely with you to get the best for your child. They will take into account your unique knowledge and experience of what works well for your son or daughter at home. They will keep you informed about what support is being provided.

Listening to the views of young people

It is also important that schools listen to the views of young people. Pupils are more likely to benefit from support if they have been involved in decisions about it. Young people should have the opportunity to give their views in a way that suits their needs and that they are comfortable with.



What are my rights as a parent?

If your child has additional support needs, or you think they might have, you have the following rights:



If your son or daughter is aged 16 or over and is still at school, they have the same rights as you. If they are unable to exercise these rights, you can act on their behalf. Recent changes to the law mean that young people aged 12 to 15 will also soon have almost all of the same rights as parents and over-16s when it comes to additional support for learning, and will be able to use these rights on their own behalf. But they don't have to use these rights if they don't want to – parents can continue to use them on their behalf. You can see more about this at www.enquire.org.uk

What happens if I'm not happy with the support my child has been offered?

Speak to the school first. If your child has a learning plan, ask to discuss its contents with the school. If you feel your child's needs have changed, it's good to share this information with the teacher. If you're still not happy, you can put your concerns in writing to the school. If you still feel the school has not provided enough support (or the right support), you can talk to your local authority. It will have a standard complaints procedure that you can follow.

If you are still not satisfied, there are more formal routes you can take:

Independent mediation

A mediator will help to resolve the issue and reach an agreement on the way forward. Parents can refer a matter to mediation. For more information, see www.enquire.org.uk/information/factsheets/mediation

Independent adjudication

An independent person will consider the issues that have been raised and will give the local authority recommendations on the best way forward.

Additional Support Needs Tribunals

You (or your child if they are aged 16 or over) can appeal to an Additional Support Needs Tribunal if you want to challenge a decision about a co-ordinated support plan and in certain other circumstances. The Tribunal has produced a guide for people using or thinking of using the tribunal system. You can get a copy from the Additional Support Needs Tribunals for Scotland, www.asntscotland.gov.uk

Where can I get more advice?

Your child's school can give you a great deal of information about any additional support that is needed.

Enquire provides advice and information about additional support for learning. You can discuss your concerns and get advice by calling the helpline on 0345 123 2303. You can also order a copy of the Parents' Guide to Additional Support for Learning, or download it from the website – see www.enquire.org.uk.

ParentZone Scotland has information on specific support needs. www.parentzone.org



the National Parent Forum of Scotland