

SEN information report, SEN policy and Local Offer: what are the differences and requirements?

The SEN Information Report and Policy are separate from the Local Offer, which is produced by the Local Authority, not the school.

SEN Policy

Broadly speaking a policy can be defined as 'an expected principle and course of action adopted by an organisation in relation to a specific area'. The DfE in February 2013 published advice on the policies and documents that governing bodies and proprietors of schools are required to have by law, i.e. statutory policies.

Policies should be based on a shared understanding of:

- Why the school exists (its **mission**)
- What it believes to be right (its **values**)
- What it is trying to achieve (its **vision**)
- What it is going to do to make this a reality (its **aims**)
- The underpinning rules that will guide action (**principles**)
- The practicalities of implementation (**policies and procedures**)

In effect a policy should include:

- **Status** – statutory, expected or recommended
- **Purpose** – a brief statement referring to relevant local guidelines, national regulations and the [school's own values, vision and aims](#)
- **Consultation** – list of groups, individuals and documents consulted. This is useful when the policy needs revising
- **Cross-references** to other documents – a more coherent approach can be achieved by linking with other policies
- **Roles and responsibilities** of headteacher, staff and governors – the core and most detailed part of the policy
- **Monitoring and evaluation** arrangements – what evidence would demonstrate success and how and when it will be brought to the attention of the governing body
- **Date established** by governing body
- **Date for review**
- **Signature** of Chair of Governors (or Chair of Committee)

SEN Information Report

Technically this is a written, annual account of something that has been achieved or completed.

The revised SEN Code of Practice (DfE, April 2014) states:

'The governing bodies of maintained schools and maintained nursery schools and the proprietors of academy schools **must** publish information on their websites about the implementation of the governing body's or the proprietor's policy for pupils with SEN.' (p93)

In effect it is an account of the implementation of the policy, not what is aspirational.

What must the Information Report include?

The revised Code (April 2014) sets out on page 93 (para 6.74) that the information report **must** include information about:

- the kinds of special educational needs that are provided for
- policies for identifying children and young people with SEN and assessing their needs, including the name and contact details of the SENCO (mainstream schools)
- arrangements for consulting parents of children with SEN and involving them in their child's education
- arrangements for consulting young people with SEN and involving them in their education
- arrangements for assessing and reviewing children and young people's progress towards outcomes, including the opportunities available to work with parents and young people as part of this assessment and review
- arrangements for supporting children and young people in moving between phases of education and in preparing for adulthood. As young people prepare for adulthood outcomes should reflect their ambitions, which could include higher education, employment, independent living and participation in society
- the approach to teaching children and young people with SEN
- how adaptations are made to the curriculum and the learning environment of children and young people with SEN
- the expertise and training of staff to support children and young people with SEN, including how specialist expertise will be secured
- evaluating the effectiveness of the provision made for children and young people with SEN
- how children and young people with SEN are enabled to engage in activities available with children and young people in the school who do not have SEN
- support for improving emotional and social development. This should include extra pastoral support arrangements for listening to the views of children and young people with SEN and measures to prevent bullying
- how the school involves other bodies, including health and social care bodies, local authority support services and voluntary sector organisations, in meeting children and young people's SEN and supporting their families

In addition consideration should be given to:

Children and young people looked after by the local authority who have SEN and how the curriculum has been made accessible.

Is there a set format?

Schools have the autonomy to decide the format; as long as the above points are covered and the format is accessibly and children-, young person- and parent-friendly. The revised SEN Code does stress the use of plain language.

Schools in the Local Offer chapter of the Code

The Local Offer chapter starts on page 47 of the Code and schools are covered in particular on page 57 (including the following clauses).

4.34 Schools have additional duties under the SEND Regulations 2014. Schools must publish more detailed information [than the local authority] about their arrangements for identifying, assessing and making provision for pupils with SEN.

4.35 The information must also include information about the arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils, the steps taken to prevent disabled pupils from being treated less favourably than other pupils, the facilities provided to assist access for disabled pupils and the school's accessibility plans. The school-specific information should relate to the school's arrangements for providing a graduated response to children's SEN. It should elaborate on the information provided at a local authority wide level in the Local Offer.

4.36 The Local Offer must make clear where this information can be found and must make clear how young people and parents can find relevant information published by post-16 institutions about their SEN provision (see Chapter 7).

Information overlap?

The main purpose for requiring schools to publish a SEN Policy, cooperatively contribute to the Local Offer and publish an annual SEN Information Report is to increase accountability.

Many would argue that there is an information overlap between these three documents and to some degree this is true. However (again, broadly speaking), the Local Offer format in local authorities generally fits into two styles.

1. Some LAs have adopted a drop-down menu approach and therefore any new updates remove previous entries. As a result, there is no historical record of what the school has delivered or indeed evidence of capacity building in the school.
2. Others have adopted a pdf document upload approach, where it is possible to see year on year the provision in a school and make comparisons.

The following table provides a summary distinguishing the three forms of information, though the content may overlap.

	Local Offer	SEND Policy	SEN Information Report
Responsibility	Local authority	Governing body	SENCO, SLT and governors
Purpose	What's on offer	How will it be delivered?	What is actually/has been delivered?
Strategic links	Joint Commissioning, Provision Management systems and the school improvement plan	School values and vision, structures and procedures	School improvement plan and transition arrangements
Where published	LA portal	School website (and hard copy if requested)	School website (and hard copy if requested)
Involvement of CYP and families	Co-produced and feedback published online	Consultation	Copy supplied; may inform local feedback
Updated	Periodically, at least once a year	Every 3 years	Annually

CYP and family friendly format required	Yes	Yes	Yes
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Credit: [Anita Devi](http://my.optimus-education.com/sen-information-report-sen-policy-and-local-offer-what-are-differences-and-requirements) (http://my.optimus-education.com/sen-information-report-sen-policy-and-local-offer-what-are-differences-and-requirements)