



Information for parents

The Essex approach to teaching pupils with maths difficulties

This information leaflet has been co-created by Essex parents and Local Authority SEND professionals (Special Educational Needs and Disability teams).

Our aim

For all children and young people in Essex to:

- have high quality maths teaching;
- have their individual needs identified and met early on, if they have maths difficulties despite appropriate learning opportunities;
- get the help they need to make progress in maths.

What can I do if I'm worried about my child's number recognition, addition and subtraction, problem solving and general maths progress?

Talk to your child to find out what they are finding difficult.

Talk to your child's class teacher or form tutor. Some useful questions might be:

- *How does the school measure skills and progress in maths?*
- *How is my child doing?*
- *What can the school do to help if my child is struggling?*
- *What can I do to help if my child is struggling?*

If their skills/progress do not improve over time, you could ask:

- *Does my child have special educational needs?*
- *What information and assessment information do school use to decide this?*

Look on the school's website at their SEND information.

You can ask to talk to the school's SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) to find out more. There are various assessments that schools can use to analyse a pupil's maths difficulties in detail - Essex LA has a list of Recommended Assessments for Identifying the Needs of Pupils with SEND.

The results should be used to decide if the pupil needs extra help to make progress, and if so, what type of help. Examples of evidence-based maths interventions are given in the document Ordinarily Available: Targeted Support, an online resource for schools, which you could look at and talk to staff about.

Essex SENDIASS (independent and confidential SEND Information, Advice and Support Service for parents) is available to help parents/carers access appropriate advice and support in all areas of SEND (Tel: 03330 138913 or email send.iass@essex.gov.uk).

What should my child's school be doing?

- All schools need to make sure they use effective teaching, assessment and intervention for maths.
- Detailed assessment and research-based interventions should be used in schools as early as possible, and continue, to help any pupil who has maths difficulties, whatever terms are used to describe their difficulties.

What about dyscalculia?

- We want to make sure that all pupils get the help they need, rather than subcategorising children and young people, so that some get help and others don't, e.g. depending on whether or not they have certain patterns of difficulties, or certain words are used to describe their needs (such as dyscalculia), or their parents have paid for a particular assessment.
- Scientifically, there is no difference between what some people call 'dyscalculia' and other people call 'severe and persistent maths difficulties', or other terms. There isn't an agreed assessment pathway for 'dyscalculia', or different interventions that are needed for pupils if their maths difficulties are described as dyscalculia.
- Essex LA is committed to providing the right help to children regardless of how their needs are described.
- If your child is struggling with maths, the most important thing is that we work out what they can't yet do and help them to learn it.

What about extra time/help for exams?

- Any assessments that are used for access arrangements (e.g. extra time or support in tests/exams) must be arranged by the school SENCO. Any other reports cannot be used for this purpose.

To support best practice in schools...

- Essex Local Authority (LA) has developed some training called 'Maths and Maths Difficulties' which is available to all schools for free. This is based on up-to-date research about how children learn maths skills, and on the SEND Code of Practice (2015).
- Schools can also have training on the evidence-based Essex Educational Psychology Service Maths Intervention.
- Essex LA works with schools to further develop research in maths, focussing on number skills. A number of Essex school, both primary and secondary have been involved in this research.