

INTRODUCTION

We have a lot of parents contact us to ask what support they are entitled to receive at school for their child. Unfortunately there is no clear-cut answer. We have provided this brochure to help you find what you might be entitled to. More information is available from the Ministry of Education.

The main reason it is hard to give a clear answer to the question of support is that every child is looked at on an individual basis. What exact needs each child has are assessed rather than looking solely at the condition they have. However, the reason conditions have names is because the children with the condition share common challenges. Using this stereotypical view we have looked at what services are available, the criteria for them and have summarised the most likely services a child with Asperger's Syndrome will be entitled to.

Please note that "classic" autism presents itself in quite a different way to Asperger's Syndrome. Children with "classic" autism are likely to be non-verbal and very withdrawn. Therefore there tends to be more services readily available to them, many of which aim to get the child to connect and interact with the world.

For those that have children that are not yet of school age, the Ministry of Education provides an **Early Intervention Service** that can assist with diagnosis, support and transition to school. You can contact them by calling your local Group Special Education direct.

SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT

When starting down the path to getting assistance at school, you need to begin with the school and your child's classroom teacher. The following are 3 key services that they can access for you.

Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs)

This service (RTLb) is available to all New Zealand state schools. RTLbs usually work with a cluster of schools. Teachers who require RTLb services refer children through the school process to their RTLb, where the case is processed. RTLb will discuss the case with the child's teacher first and then with the parent or sometimes with both teacher and parent together. A strategy will be agreed upon and recommendations made.

Individual Education Program (IEP)

When a student is identified as needing:

- extra assistance, adapted programmes or learning environments
 - specialised equipment or materials to support them in special or regular education settings
- then they should have an individual education program (IEP) written for them.

The writing of the IEP is a collaborative process involving the teacher and parent as well as any other staff working with the child such as RTLbs, teacher aides, teacher in charge of special needs, principal etc.

The IEP will identify the student's needs, and goals will be made for their progress in key areas. How these goals will be met, and who is responsible for doing what, are also listed. Finally a date will be set to review the plan and, if needed, create a new one. This is usually no more than one term away.

The great advantage of this process is that everyone is clear on what the priorities are and what role they are playing. Because there are specific goals, when the IEP is reviewed, progress is easily charted. If there are obvious areas identified where more support is needed, that support can then be applied for.

The Ministry of Education can provide you with a document that describes the IEP process in full.

Special Education Grant (SEG)

Each school is given a sum of money each year to fund special education initiatives. Unfortunately this grant is not needs based and often does not stretch very far. The school has some discretion in how it uses this grant but it is typically used to employ one or more teacher aides. These teacher aides work one on one or with small groups of children who have learning needs but who do not qualify for other funding.

MINISTRY BASED SUPPORT

The old Special Education Service has now become part of the Ministry of Education and is known as Group Special Education (GSE), although it is still commonly referred to as SES. They are primarily there to provide support to students with moderate, high or very high needs.

Those with moderate needs are mainly supported through the school based strategies listed above. In addition the school can apply for occupational therapy if your child has physical needs, and speech and language therapy. If an RTLB is working with your child and they recognise that they have moderate needs but are not currently funded by ORRS (see next page) then the RTLB can apply for extra teacher aide funding through **Learning Support**.

For students with high or very high needs, ongoing support that is "attached" to the student, rather than the school, is offered. This means the funding moves with them when they change schools. This funding is known as ORRS (see next page).

Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes

As at July 2005 ORRS funding eligibility is as follows:

Students are eligible when they meet at least one of nine criteria. They require intervention from specialists and/or specialist teachers for access to the New Zealand Curriculum, and/or adaptation of curriculum content.

To meet the criteria they must have significant educational needs that arise from an **extreme** or **severe** difficulty with one or more of the following:

- a) learning
- b) hearing
- c) vision
- d) mobility
- e) language use and social communication.

Students also meet the criteria when they have significant educational needs that arise from a **moderate** to **high** difficulty with **learning** combined with any two of:

- a) hearing
- b) vision
- c) mobility
- d) language use and social communication

[Check the Min. of Ed's website for updates]

Behaviour Service

This is a short term service for children at the severe end of the behavioural spectrum. The process can be started by calling GSE and asking to speak to a member of the Behaviour Service Team (BEST).

Contacting Group Special Education

Government phone numbers are listed in the blue section at the front of the Whitepages. Look under E for 'Education, Ministry of' and Special Education will be listed underneath. The national hotline is 0800 622 222. You can also visit www.minedu.govt.nz