

Independent schools and additional support for learning

This factsheet explains:

- the law on support for learning in independent schools
- what support independent schools need to give disabled pupils
- what you can do if you are not happy with the support your child is getting in an independent school.

I am sending my child to an independent school. What support should they get with their learning?

Independent schools do not have the same legal duties as schools run by local authorities to provide additional support for pupils. This is because the law on additional support for learning only applies to local authorities.

If your child attends an independent school, it is best to speak to the school to find out what support might be available for your child. Most independent schools have a policy on what support they can provide for learners, and how they assess children's needs.

You can ask your local authority to assess your child's needs or to provide extra help for them, but they do not have to agree to do so.

What support do independent schools need to provide for disabled pupils?

Although independent schools are not covered by the law on additional support for learning, they are covered by equality law. This means that all independent schools have a legal duty not to discriminate against disabled pupils or treat them unfavourably. This applies to:

- school admissions
- the provision of education
- any other facilities or services that the school provides.

All schools must take steps to make sure that disabled pupils can be fully involved in all aspects of school life and are not disadvantaged. These steps are called 'reasonable adjustments'. Reasonable adjustments could include things like assistance from a sign language interpreter, specialised computer software, extra staff help, or adapted PE equipment. They might also include making exceptions to school policies to make sure that individual pupils are not put at a disadvantage – for example, flexibility about school uniform policy or curriculum choices.

Equality law does not cover adjustments to the physical accessibility of schools for individual pupils. Instead, all independent schools must plan for improvements to the accessibility of their school in general by having an Accessibility Strategy. Accessibility Strategies must set out they will improve access to the curriculum, the physical accessibility of the school, and information for and communication with disabled pupils. You can ask to see a copy of a school's Accessibility Strategy and they must provide it to you.

Find out more in our factsheet on [Disabled pupils and the law](#).

I'm not happy with the support my child is getting at their independent school. What can I do?

The first step is to arrange a meeting with the school to talk through your concerns. You can explain the reasons why you feel your child is struggling and ask what support or strategies the school could put in place for them.

If you have already tried this, or are not satisfied with the outcome, you can put your concerns in writing to the head teacher of the school.

Every independent school should have a policy and procedure for complaints about the education and services they provide. You can use this to make a formal complaint to the school if you have not been able to resolve things with the steps above.

You can also contact the school's board of managers, or the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (see below for contact details).

If your child is disabled and you feel the school is treating them unfairly, you can contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service for advice on how to speak to the school about this. You can contact them on **0808 800 0082** or via their website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com.

Where can I find out more?

The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) www.scis.org.uk

Tel: **0131 556 2316** Email: info@scis.org.uk

SCIS is an educational charity that represents most independent schools in Scotland, providing information, advice, and guidance about independent education.



How Enquire can help

Enquire can help you understand your child's rights to additional support for learning and how to work in partnership with their school or nursery to make sure your child gets the support they need.

Enquire can:

- explain your child's rights to additional support for learning
- listen to any questions and concerns
- advise you on the way forward
- help you find local education and support services.

You can contact our helpline on **0345 123 2303** or info@enquire.org.uk
Access to interpreters is available.

You can also find lots more information about additional support for learning, including our full range of publications, at www.enquire.org.uk

The information on our website is available in over 100 languages and with a range of accessibility tools, such as text-to-speech.

Reach is our website for children and young people. Reach helps pupils to understand their rights to feel supported, included, listened to and involved in decisions at school: www.reach.scot

Enquire is also a partner in the My Rights, My Say service. My Rights, My Say supports children aged 12-15 with additional support needs to exercise their rights to be involved in decisions about their support in school:
www.myrightsmysay.scot

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Enquire is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by Children in Scotland

