

Including All Special Education & Physical Needs

Caring for children with special educational needs can instil feelings of fear and lack of confidence in practitioners who have not received any relevant formal training. However, you do not need to be an expert to care for children with special educational needs.

Educate yourself about the child's specific needs in relation to their disability/disabilities and be aware that they will not fall into specific categories. Every child is an individual with individual needs and capabilities so it is important not to generalise; rather, use your newfound knowledge as a guideline to supporting the child's unique abilities and needs.

Physical activity helps children with various developmental disabilities gain confidence, develop better co-ordination, and improve motor skills. Balance and motor skills support cognitive development and academic achievement so becoming aware of how to adapt your provision to optimise the participation of all children is paramount.

Inclusive Physical Development Environment

Creating an inclusive environment provides the opportunity for children of all abilities and interests to participate in all activities, including children with special needs.

An inclusive environment should:

- Allow for individuals interest and abilities
- Offer activities that are attainable, yet challenging
- Ensure choice is freely available and respected
- Provide support only when requested by the child or when you feel they may come to harm
- Allow for risk-taking in a safe and secure environment

Creating an Inclusive Physical Development Environment for Children with Special Educational Needs:

- **Preconceived Ideas**

Children with special educational needs are children first; do not underestimate their intelligence or ability.

- **Paint a Picture**

Talk to the child and work with their parents, carers, support worker or co-ordinator and any other professionals that care for them. Ask questions to gain information about the child to establish what their likes, dislikes, strengths, needs and limitations are and what might upset them. This will help you to plan accordingly.



- **Succeed and Enjoy**

As with any other child, it is important that children with special educational needs succeed in and enjoy physical activity. Therefore, make use of differentiation and progression.

- **Reasons to Include**

Find reasons to include children with special needs rather than to exclude them. At times, it may be very challenging to include children of all abilities and can be tempting to give a child with SEN a role that is on the periphery of the activity, e.g. taking photographs of the other children, keeping score. This child will not be included in the activity.

- **Prepare for a Range of Abilities**

There may be occasions where the child with special educational needs will not be able to take part in a particular activity to allow for the needs of other children. Therefore, prepare sessions with a range of abilities in mind. Perhaps provide a rotation of activities where at least one activity is achievable and challenging for all children.

- **Range of Skills**

If an activity is made up of various skills, of which some are unattainable for the child, identify what they can achieve and start with those skills. Build from that skill to allow the activity to challenge other children and allow the child to remain at the achievable level.

- **Prepare Children**

For many children with special educational needs it is important to prepare them for the day and give them warnings as to when the activity will end and the next one will start.

