



Information for parents – Inclusive education (IF)

Dear parents

Children/young people are very different: From their interests and where they are in their development, to their requirements and needs, their talents and the kinds of things they like. But minor or more serious learning difficulties can also vary among children/young people. Class teachers in mainstream schools aim to meet the needs of each child/young person as fully as possible and to help the child/young person develop within their capabilities. In the classroom, the child/young person's subject teachers receive additional help from qualified special needs teachers (Schulischen Heilpädagogen und Heilpädagoginnen (SHP)) who focus on integrating learners into the regular class programme (Integrativen Förderung (IF)).

What are special educational needs?

Special educational needs can mean when a child/young person meets the level they are expected to achieve only with substantial effort, or only partially or not at all. Special educational needs can also mean that a child/young person is gifted/talented and is not being challenged at school. These special educational needs may be temporary or may last for some time. When there are differences between the expectations of the school and the capabilities of a child/young person, the school looks to take action to enhance the child/young person's progress within the scope of inclusive education.

What can the school do?

It is very important for the class teacher and qualified special needs teachers to work together as a team in mainstream classes so that special educational needs are identified as early on as possible.

Once special educational needs are identified or suspected, the class teacher invites the parents to a parent-teacher meeting to evaluate the child/young person's current level. A specialist teacher or therapist may also be present at the meeting as well as the child/young person but this depends on their age. The aim of the meeting is to discuss and record the needs of the child/young person, objectives as well as what action should be taken. If a further assessment is required or if those attending the meeting cannot reach an agreement, the school involves an educational psychologist.

If the child/young person's individual objectives differ greatly from those of the class, then a parent-teacher meeting is held – usually following an educational psychology assessment - to assess and agree on individual learning goals. This means that the child/young person may not receive grades in one or more subjects in their school report but receive a progress report instead.

The action taken is reviewed at further parent-teacher talks to evaluate the child/young person's level at least one year after implementation.

What is inclusive education (Integrative Förderung IF)?

Qualified special needs teachers regularly or periodically visit classes, with a focus on kindergarten and primary school levels. All the children benefit from this involvement and assistance and it strengthens the school as a whole. It allows the class teacher and the special needs teachers to support children and young people from all levels and classes during their education.

Inclusive education is of particular benefit to schools or individuals with the following challenges:

- General learning (eg attentiveness, memory, strategies for learning and for solving problems)
- Reading and writing (including language acquisition and conceptualisation, literacy problems)
- Mathematics skills (weaknesses in arithmetic)
- Dealing with tasks (eg motivation, staying on task, managing own behaviour, dealing with feelings such as happiness and frustration)
- Gifted children and young people not being challenged
- Dealing with others (social and behavioural skills, controlling proximity and distance)

The support builds on the child/young person's strengths. It is designed to meet their needs and helps them to progress both in their education and socially. The support can take place within or outside of the class, in a group or one-to-one.

The teaching staff can also benefit from the special needs teachers when working on facilitation and inclusion/integration. For example, the class teacher and special needs staff can plan and teach a lesson together (team teaching), they can both observe learning processes in the class, and they can prepare suitable teaching materials and choose the most suitable way of teaching. The special needs teachers create individual education plans and, working with the class teacher, write a report.

Some children/young people require specialist expertise from therapists (see Information for parents leaflets: «Speech and language therapy» and «Psychomotor therapy») or they need support in learning German as a second language (see Information for parents «German as a second language - DaZ»). Different local authorities also provide further support for gifted

children/young people (see Information for parents «Supporting gifted and talented learners»), and offer support with homework or childcare services.

What can parents do?

Solving problems that have an effect on the child/young person's ability to learn can only be achieved if parents and teaching staff work together. Take an active interest in your child's school life and do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher if you have any questions.

If you think your child may have special educational needs, you can request a parent-teacher talk to evaluate your child's current level. During these talks you can also agree on how you can support your child. Many difficulties exist at home too or when your child is doing their homework. It is important that those support measures you introduce at home complement those at school and that they reinforce each other.

You can find parent organisations at county level and parent associations in the community. These platforms enable you to access information, share experiences and find solutions for children and young people with special educational needs at school, at home or when choosing a career.

Parents can also get advice and support from relevant specialist support services (eg educational psychology advisory services, youth services).

Information / advice

Educational psychology services (You can find addresses at www.vsa.zh.ch → Gesundheit & Prävention → Schulpsychologie)

Youth and family advisory services: Jugend- und Familienberatungen der Jugendsekretariate (You can find addresses at unter: www.ajb.zh.ch/JS)

Information about parent-teacher talks to evaluate a child's current level: Information «Schulische Standortgespräche» (unter www.vsa.zh.ch → Schulbetrieb & Unterricht → Sonderpädagogisches → Zuweisungsverfahren → Schulische Standortgespräche)

Organisations for parents:

- Vereinigung der Eltern-Organisationen des Kantons Zürich: www.vez.ch
- www.schule-elternhaus.ch
- www.verband-dyslexie.ch