

INCLUSIVE  
EDUCATION

# Stretford High School's Graduated SEND Approach: A Parent-Friendly Guide

**Introduction:** At Stretford High School, we are committed to supporting every child's needs. When a student has Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), we follow a **graduated approach** in line with our 2024 SEND Policy and the national SEND Code of Practice. This means we provide support step-by-step, increasing help as needed so that no child is left behind.

We start with high-quality teaching in the classroom for all, and if a child needs more help, we add extra support in stages. Our approach has three main stages – **early concerns, SEN Support** in school, and if necessary, an **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** – which we explain in this guide.

Throughout each stage, we work in partnership with you (parents/carers) and keep you informed, as highlighted in our policy (we aim *"to communicate with parents about all aspects of the special needs provision made for their children and to seek to develop this partnership"*). In this booklet, we outline each stage of our graduated SEND support and how we, together with Trafford Council, ensure your child gets the right help.

# Stage 1: Early Concerns and Quality First Teaching

Most students' needs are met through "**inclusive Quality First Teaching**" in the classroom. **Quality First Teaching** means our teachers adapt lessons to help all learners – for example, using different materials, breaking tasks down, or providing extra cues. Class teachers regularly check every child's progress and look for any who are struggling more than expected. This could include a child making significantly slower progress than their peers, not closing attainment gaps, or having difficulties in areas like social skills.

When a teacher spots such concerns, the **first step** is to try targeted strategies within the classroom. The teacher will *"target the student's area of weakness with differentiated, high-quality teaching"* – in simple terms, they'll try new approaches or extra support in class to help your child.

If your child **still isn't making enough progress** after these initial in-class interventions, the teacher will involve our Special Educational Needs Coordinator (**SENCO**). At Stretford High, our SENCO is **Mrs. Deborah Rhodes**. The teacher will **raise the issue with the SENCO** for an initial discussion on whether the difficulties might be due to an underlying special educational need. We will monitor your child closely at this point. We might also talk to you as parents at this early stage to gather your insights – after all, you know your child best.

Should concerns persist even with these strategies, the teacher (or Head of Year or SENCO) will take the **next step: filling out a Central Referral Form (CRF)**. A CRF is an internal referral form that alerts our school's **CRF team** to a student's continued difficulties. This team – which includes key staff from our Inclusion and Pastoral departments – will review the situation **holistically**, looking at academic progress *and* wellbeing. They discuss next steps for the student from both welfare and educational perspectives. In practice, the CRF team meeting is a bit like an in-school panel that considers what further support or investigation is needed. They might recommend additional classroom strategies, small group support, or further observation of the student. **Where necessary – and always in consultation with you (the parents/carers)** – the team may also suggest involving an **external specialist** at this stage. For example, we could seek advice from an educational psychologist, speech & language therapist, or other specialist, if we suspect a specific underlying need. **Rest assured, we would always talk with you and get your permission before involving any outside professional.** It's important to note that *"slow progress and low attainment will not automatically mean a student is recorded as having SEN"*. We recognize that children learn at different paces. This early concerns stage is about figuring out what the barrier might be and trying some extra help – it **does not** mean your child is immediately labelled or added to the SEN register. Many issues can be resolved with some targeted support at this stage. If those efforts pay off and your child catches up, we will simply continue with good teaching and monitoring. If difficulties continue, however, we move to a more formal level of support: **SEN Support**.



# Stage 2: SEN Support – Extra Help through the School's Inclusion Department

If a student continues to struggle despite high-quality teaching and initial interventions, we may decide, **in full consultation with parents**, to place them on **SEN Support**. This means the child is formally identified as having SEN and will receive **additional sustained support** beyond what is normally provided in class.

## How do we make this decision?

Typically, this happens if we see **ongoing difficulties over time**. For example, if over **two school terms** (approximately two of our progress review cycles) a child *"still makes little or no progress in specific areas"* or *"continues to work at levels considerably lower than expected for their age"*, even after targeted help, we consider SEN Support.

## Other triggers for SEN Support

Other triggers might be persistent problems in literacy or numeracy, or *"emotional/behavioural problems that substantially impede learning"* – even after putting a **student passport** or **Pastoral Support Plan (PSP)** in place. We also consider physical or sensory needs; for instance, if a child has a hearing, vision or motor difficulty that requires specialist equipment or regular specialist input.

In short, SEN Support is for when a child's needs are significant and ongoing, and they require more help than what the usual classroom adjustments can provide.

## What happens at SEN Support?

First, we meet with you and (where appropriate) your child to plan the support. This meeting is often called a **Parental Partnership Meeting**, reflecting that we work together with families. In our SEND Policy it notes that if the school decides extra support is required, *"the SENCO, supported by the Inclusion/Pastoral Team, in collaboration with teachers, the parent and the student, will discuss, determine and plan a future support package"*, usually at a Parental Partnership Meeting.

In this meeting, we'll talk about what's working, what's not, and agree on a plan of action. **Mrs. Rhodes (SENCO) or a member of the team** will lead the meeting, and it often includes a member of the Inclusion or Pastoral team and any relevant teachers. Together, we create or update an **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** for your child. The **IEP** is a document that lists your child's specific needs, the support strategies we will use, and specific targets or outcomes we're aiming for. It's a collaborative plan – we welcome your input and your child's views in shaping it. The IEP also ensures everyone (teachers, support staff, and you at home) are on the same page about how to help your child.

On **SEN Support**, your child will get a **sustained level of support** coordinated by our **Inclusion Department**. Stretford High's Inclusion Department includes the SENCO (Mrs. Rhodes), a Deputy SENCO, an EAL (English as an Additional Language) teacher, and a team of teaching assistants (TAs). This team works together to provide interventions and support tailored to each student.



### Small Group Support

Targeted small-group or one-to-one interventions (extra sessions for literacy, numeracy, social skills, etc.)



### In-Class Support

Support from a teaching assistant within regular classroom settings



### Specialist Resources

Access to specialist resources or technology, or adjustments to the curriculum



### External Services

Involvement of external specialists like educational psychologists or speech therapists (with your consent)

Crucially, **we review progress regularly**. Our school's policy is that **IEPs are reviewed three times per year for students on SEN Support (and those with EHCPs)**, with your active involvement in those reviews. Typically, this means we will invite you in (or arrange a call/meeting) roughly once a term to discuss how your child is doing, what progress has been made, and whether any changes to the support plan are needed. Your child is often involved in these discussions too – their own views about what's working for them are important.

This regular cycle of **"assess – plan – do – review"** is at the heart of the graduated approach. We continuously **assess** your child's needs and progress, **plan** the support or interventions, **do** or implement the support, and then **review** the impact to plan next steps. If the support is helping and your child is making good progress, fantastic – they will continue with that support (or we might gradually reduce it if they become more independent). Some students improve to the point that they no longer need the extra provision; if a child *"no longer requires provision that is different from or additional to normal differentiated teaching, they will no longer be seen as requiring SEND Support"* and can be removed from the SEN register (in consultation with parents). We always aim for our students to gain the skills to succeed with less support over time if possible. However, if despite all these efforts at SEN Support a child **still** struggles significantly, we may need to consider the next step in the graduated approach: requesting an **Education, Health and Care Plan**.

# Stage 3: Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

An **Education, Health and Care Plan**, or EHCP, is a legal document for children with the **most complex or significant needs**. Only a small minority of students will need an EHCP – usually those whose needs **cannot be fully met by the resources available at school alone**. In other words, an EHCP is typically for a child who requires support above and beyond what SEN Support (and the school's own budget) can provide.

An EHCP brings in the **local authority (Trafford Council)** to assess the child's needs in detail and, if the criteria are met, to provide additional funding or specialist provision for that child. The EHCP will *"describe the needs of the student, the provision that will be put in place, and the outcomes sought"*, and it can cover **education, health and social care** aspects of support. It is drawn up by the local authority after a formal assessment process. Importantly, **having an EHCP means the child's support is protected by law** – the provision outlined in the plan must be delivered, and the plan is reviewed annually to ensure it remains appropriate.

## When do we move to this stage?

At Stretford High, we might consider requesting an EHC **Needs Assessment** (the first step toward an EHCP) if a student remains a *"significant cause for concern"* **despite** a sustained period of SEN Support interventions. In practice, this means we have done everything we can through SEN Support – implemented and reviewed IEPs, involved specialists, made reasonable adjustments – and the student is still not making adequate progress or still needs a lot of help.

Before making a referral, we always ensure that we have followed the **SEND Code of Practice guidance and Trafford's Graduated Approach guidance** to exhaust the support available at the school level. We will also make sure we have plenty of evidence to support the application. This includes documentation of the support strategies and interventions tried (for example, a **provision map** showing the extra support given), and reports from any specialists who have seen the child (such as an educational psychologist's report, speech & language therapy report, etc.).

If we believe an EHCP is needed, the school **must discuss this with you as parents and have your agreement** before we make the formal request. In fact, we view parents as partners in this – often, the decision to request an EHCP comes out of a review meeting where school staff and parents agree that we've tried all the support we can provide internally and more help is still required.

Note: **Parents also have the right to request an EHC needs assessment directly**. You do not have to wait for the school, if you feel strongly that your child needs an EHCP. A request can be made by the parent or the young person themselves (if over 16). However, we encourage working together – typically it's best to discuss with the SENCO and try to reach an agreement, as the school will need to provide much of the supporting evidence.

If an EHCP seems warranted, the school will submit a formal **EHC Needs Assessment request to Trafford Council**. (Schools in Trafford apply via an online system called Liquid Logic, but the important part for you is that we fill in the referral forms and collate all the reports to send to the local authority.) You'll be asked to contribute your views as part of this application – for example, there's a section for parents to describe their child's needs and what outcomes they hope for.

You can also make a request for an EHC assessment yourself by writing to the local authority or using the Trafford referral form. In Trafford, the **EHC Needs Assessment form is available on the Local Offer website** for parents to download and fill in (with guidance provided to help complete it). If you as a parent are making the request, it's a good idea to inform the school as well, since we will need to provide information to the council.

**All EHC assessment requests in Trafford – whether from a school or a parent – are reviewed by the Trafford Assessment Panel (TAP)**. This is a multi-agency panel that includes education professionals (such as the SEN casework officers, educational psychologists, etc.) and sometimes health or social care representatives. The TAP's role is to look at the application and evidence and decide whether a full EHC needs assessment will be carried out.

# **EHCP Assessment: Timeline and Key Steps in Trafford**

# Overview of Trafford's 20-week EHCP process

Overview of Trafford's 20-week EHCP process. Once an EHC needs assessment is requested, a statutory **20-week timeline** begins. In an ideal scenario (and by law), if an EHCP is to be issued, it should be finalized within **20 weeks** from the date of request. The process has a few distinct phases:

## Weeks 0–6: Request & Decision Phase

1

After the request is submitted, Trafford's SEN team performs an initial **quality assurance check** (weeks 0–2) to ensure all necessary information is included. The request is then considered by the **Trafford Assessment Panel (TAP)**, which typically meets around weeks 4–6 of the process.

By law, the local authority must decide **within 6 weeks** whether or not they will carry out a full EHC needs assessment. The TAP panel reviews all the evidence (school reports, parent's views, any professional reports available) and decides if the child's needs seem significant enough to require an assessment.

**By week 6**, you will receive a letter informing you of the decision. If the decision is "**no, not to assess**", the letter will explain the reasons. The letter will also inform you of your **rights to appeal** this decision.

## Weeks 16–20: Panel Decision & Plan Finalisation

3

Trafford convenes a second panel called the **Moderation and Resource Panel (MAR)** towards the end of the assessment. The **MAR Panel** reviews the **draft EHC plan** along with all the evidence, and it **decides** whether an **EHCP will be issued** and confirms the details (such as the outcomes, the provision to be provided, and the type of school or placement).

If the MAR Panel agrees that an EHCP is warranted, the local authority will formally issue you a **draft EHC Plan** for your review. This draft will usually be sent to you by about week 16-18. You'll be asked to check the plan, make sure you're happy with the contents, and at this stage you can request any particular school or setting you want named in the plan.

You typically get 15 days to provide any comments on the draft. Finally, by **week 20**, Trafford will issue the **Final EHCP**. This is the legally binding document that outlines all the support your child must receive.

## Weeks 6–16: Assessment Phase

2

If the local authority agrees to proceed (i.e. says "**yes, we will do an EHC needs assessment**"), the process moves into the assessment stage. This is a detailed information-gathering period. The council will assign an **EHC coordinator** or caseworker who oversees the assessment.

They will contact various professionals to gather advice about your child's needs. Typically, assessments from an **educational psychologist**, your child's teachers, the SENCO, and any relevant health professionals (e.g. speech therapist, pediatrician, CAMHS if applicable) will be obtained.

You and your child will also be asked for your input – your **family views** and the child's own wishes and goals are a very important part of the EHC assessment. During this phase, there might be additional meetings or an **EHC planning meeting** to discuss what support might be needed.

By around week 12 or so, all the reports and advice should have been gathered. The local authority will then draft an EHC Plan **if** the evidence shows that one is needed. The law allows up to 16 weeks for the assessment and drafting process to be completed.

If the MAR Panel (and the assessment evidence) conclude that **your child does not require an EHCP** (in other words, that their needs can be met by the school without the extra legal plan), the local authority will inform you of a **decision not to issue a plan**. In that case, they will send you a letter explaining this decision, along with copies of all the assessment reports gathered. Even if no EHCP is given, those professional reports can be very useful – we will use them at school to update your child's SEN Support plan (Trafford refers to this as an "Element 2 SEN Support plan", meaning support funded from the school's own budget). And just like with the refusal to assess, you would have the right to **appeal** a refusal to issue a plan, and we would of course continue to support your child at SEN Support level in school. We know this outcome can be frustrating, but sometimes the assessments themselves give us new strategies to help your child, even if an EHCP isn't issued.

In summary, the EHCP process in Trafford takes up to 20 weeks from start to finish in most cases. **6 weeks** to decide on the assessment, then another **10 weeks** or so to gather advice and decide on the plan, and by **20 weeks** you should have a final answer or plan. We will guide and support you through this process whenever we initiate it for a student at Stretford High. Mrs. Rhodes (SENCO) will be your point of contact, helping to liaise with the local authority's SEN officers, ensuring forms and reports are submitted on time, and keeping you informed of progress. If an EHCP is issued for your child, our school will implement the support provisions in it and continue to monitor your child's progress. **EHCPs are reviewed annually** in a meeting (Annual Review) that includes parents, the student, school staff, and a local authority representative. At those reviews we discuss what's working and whether any changes are needed to the plan as your child grows.

# Our SEND Team and How We Work with Families

Supporting students with SEND at Stretford High is truly a **whole-school effort**, but we do have key staff and structures in place:

# Key SEND Staff at Stretford High



## SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator)

Mrs. **Deborah Rhodes** is our SENDCo. She is a qualified teacher with specialist training in SEN. Mrs. Rhodes leads the overall strategy for SEND support in the school. According to our policy, her role is to *"provide professional guidance to colleagues and liaise and work with staff, parents, and other agencies to make sure that students with SEN receive appropriate support and high-quality" education.*

In practice, that means Mrs. Rhodes oversees identification of needs, coordinates interventions, and ensures that the plans (IEPs or EHCPs) are carried out. She also ensures that you as parents are kept informed and involved. Feel free to contact her via the school office if you ever have concerns or questions about your child's needs – she is always happy to arrange a meeting or phone call.



## Inclusion Department

Our Inclusion Department is the team that supports the SENDCo in providing help to students. It *"comprises a SENDCo, Deputy SENDCo, an EAL teacher and Teaching Assistants"*. This means aside from Mrs. Rhodes, we have a **Deputy SENDCo** who assists with managing the day-to-day support (for example, helping to run review meetings or coordinate exam access arrangements), an **EAL (English as an Additional Language) teacher** who supports students for whom English is not their first language, and a number of **Teaching Assistants (TAs)**.

Our TAs are deployed in various ways – some work in particular subject areas, some run specific intervention programmes (like literacy groups), and some provide one-to-one support for students with higher levels of need. The Inclusion Department works closely with class teachers to implement support in the classroom and to run withdrawal sessions or targeted interventions outside the classroom.

# Classroom Teachers and Pastoral Staff

While the SEND team coordinates support, every **classroom teacher** at Stretford High is also responsible for helping to meet the needs of students with SEND. We train our staff in inclusive teaching strategies (for example, all teachers receive training on differentiating work and managing common learning difficulties) so that "**all students... can gain access to quality learning experiences through Quality First Teaching**".

The SENDCo and Inclusion team regularly advise and support teachers with strategies for specific students. Our **pastoral team** (such as Heads of Year and Form Tutors) also play a role, especially for students whose needs overlap with pastoral issues like behaviour, attendance, or emotional well-being.



The SENCO and pastoral staff collaborate (recall the earlier mention of the **Inclusion/Pastoral Team** working together at the SEN Support planning stage). For example, if a student has a Pastoral Support Plan due to behaviour issues and also has underlying SEN, the SENDCo and pastoral lead will jointly plan the support to ensure consistency. We really take a **holistic approach** – recognizing that a child's learning, confidence, and behaviour are all connected.

# Student and Parent Involvement

We cannot overstate the importance of the partnership with families. **You** as parents (and your child) are central members of the SEND process. We make sure to involve you at every stage – from that initial concern (we might call you for a chat or send a note to ask if you've noticed similar issues at home), to formal planning meetings for SEN Support, to regular IEP reviews and of course the annual reviews for EHCPs.

Our SEND Policy explicitly states that students with SEND and their parents are involved *"in the different... graduated stages of provision to meet their special educational needs"*. We know that by working together, we can achieve the best outcomes. In meetings, we'll always encourage you to share your hopes and any strategies you find work well at home.

We also try to involve students by using tools like a **"student centred passport"** – this is basically a one-page profile written from the student's perspective about what helps them – and by inviting them into discussions about their targets (appropriate to their age and understanding).

If at any point you're unsure why we are doing something or what something means (education is full of jargon like "IEP", "EHCP", etc.), please ask – we're here to clarify and support. Communication is key: you will have contact details for the SENDCo or the relevant staff, and you shouldn't hesitate to reach out if you have a concern. Similarly, we will contact you if we have any concerns or news to share about your child's progress.

# Inclusive Education at Stretford High

In day-to-day school life, we strive to be an **inclusive school**. Your child will be in mainstream classes, following the same curriculum as others as much as possible. We believe (as our policy says) that *"inclusive schools enable all their students to gain maximum advantage from all the opportunities education has to offer"*.

Sometimes, as part of support, a student might have some **withdrawal sessions** (working outside the classroom individually or in a small group) for specific interventions – but we minimize time away from class and ensure it's balanced so they don't miss core content.



All our students with SEND are encouraged to take part in the full life of the school – including clubs, trips, and events – with any necessary accommodations made to facilitate that.

# Further Support and Information for Parents/Carers

Navigating SEND processes can be challenging, but there are resources to help you. Here are some key sources of information and support in Trafford and at our school:



## Stretford High School SEND Information Report

In addition to our SEND Policy, we publish a **SEND Information Report** each year (available on our website or via the school office). This report gives details about the specific support we offer, how our curriculum is made inclusive, and answers common questions. It's a great overview of "what we do" for SEND in our school. If you haven't seen it, we encourage you to read it – and we're happy to provide a hard copy on request.



## Trafford Parents and Young People's Partnership Service (PYPPS)

This is Trafford's independent SEND Information, Advice, and Support Service, often just called **Trafford SENDIASS**. **PYPPS** provides free, impartial advice to parents and young people regarding special needs. If you ever feel you need advice independent of the school, or help with an EHCP application or an appeal, PYPPS is there to support you. You can contact them by phone at **0161 912 3150** or visit their website [Trafford PYPPS](#).



## Trafford's Local Offer

The **Local Offer** is an online directory of all SEND services and information in our local area (Trafford). It's hosted on the Trafford Directory website. You can find information about schools, colleges, health services, support groups, and more. It also includes guidance on processes like the graduated approach and EHCPs. Our SEND policy specifically advises parents to refer to "**Trafford's Directory – Local Offer website**" for more information. The Local Offer can be accessed here: [Trafford Local Offer](#).



## EHCP Application Forms and Guides

If you are considering requesting an EHCP needs assessment yourself, the forms and guidance are available on the Trafford Local Offer website. Specifically, Trafford has an **EHCP Self-Referral Form for parents** which you can download online. The form comes with a helpful "**Prompt Sheet**" that explains how to fill it in and what information to include. You can find these by searching the Local Offer site for "EHC needs assessment form" or via the [Trafford SENDIASS EHCP page](#).

# Additional Resources and Support

## Trafford's SEND Advisory Services and Other Resources

Trafford has various specialist teams (for example, advisory teachers for autism, hearing impairment, etc., Educational Psychology Service, Speech and Language Therapy services linked to schools, etc.). Through the graduated approach, we might involve some of these and you might hear of them or meet them. The Local Offer lists all these services.

Additionally, **Trafford Parent Forum** is a local group of parents of children with SEND that offers peer support and runs events – while not officially mentioned in our school policy, it's a resource you might find valuable (they have a Facebook group and website where they share information and gather parent views to feedback to the local authority).



Finally, always remember that **we are here to support both your child and your family**. We understand that the journey through SEND support – from early interventions to possibly applying for an EHCP – can be overwhelming at times. We aim to be **professional, yet approachable and supportive** in all our communications.

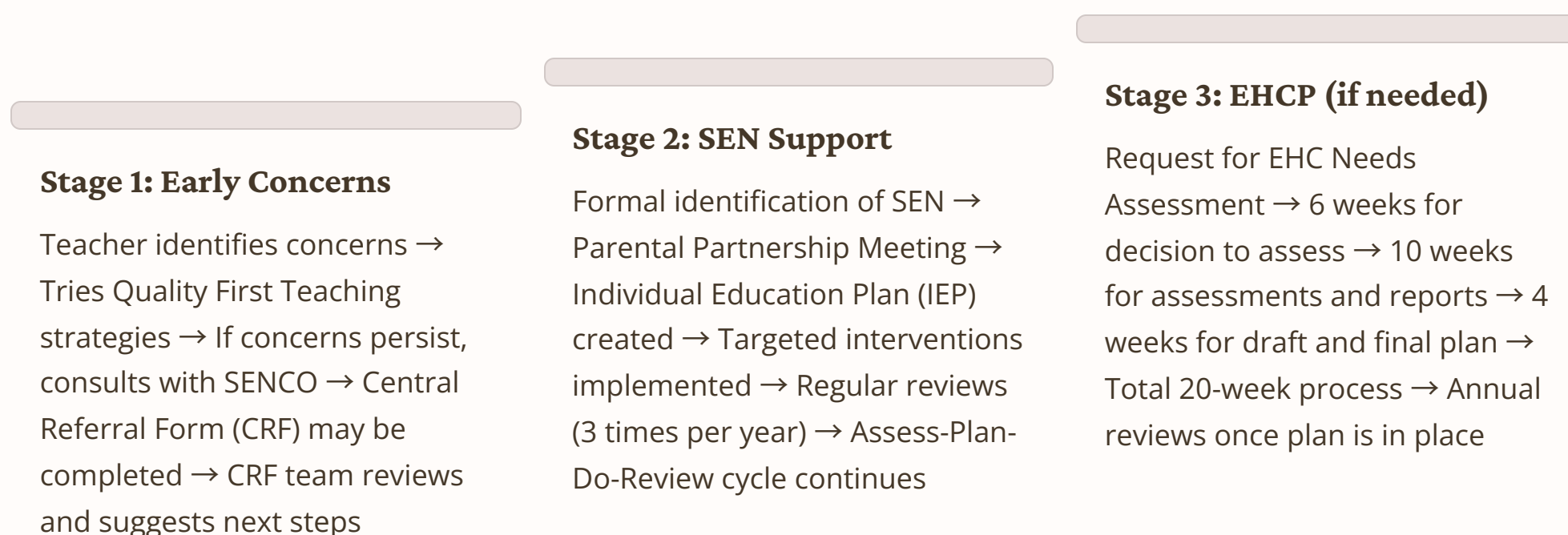
If there's ever anything you don't understand or are worried about, you can contact the **Inclusion Department or Mrs. Rhodes (SENDCo)** via the school. We will gladly arrange a meeting or phone call to discuss your child's progress or any aspect of their support. Our goal is the same as yours: to help your child thrive, enjoy their education, and achieve their potential with the right support in place.

# Useful Contacts and Simplified Timeline

## Useful Contacts Summary:

<b>Stretford High School SENDCo (Deborah Rhodes):</b>	via school phone 0161 8761850 or email drhodes@stretfordhigh.com – for any school-based SEND queries or concerns.
<b>Trafford SEND Local Offer:</b>	<a href="http://trafforddirectory.co.uk/localoffer">trafforddirectory.co.uk/localoffer</a> – information on services, the graduated approach, and EHCP processes in Trafford.
<b>Trafford PYPPS (SENDIASS):</b>	Phone 0161 912 3150, website <a href="http://traffordpypps.co.uk">traffordpypps.co.uk</a> – independent advice for parents and young people (can help with EHCP forms, appeals, etc.).
<b>EHCP Parent Referral Form:</b>	Download from the Local Offer website or request from the school – use if you wish to initiate an EHC needs assessment yourself (school can support you with this).
<b>Trafford Parent Forum:</b>	A forum for parents to connect – <a href="http://traffordparentsforum.com">traffordparentsforum.com</a>

## Simplified Timeline of the Graduated SEND Approach



We hope this guide has clarified how the graduated SEND support works at **Stretford High School** and in Trafford. Remember, the graduated approach is all about **the right support at the right time**: starting with quality teaching, adding more help when needed, and involving the local authority for an EHCP if the need is great. At every stage, we believe in working **together with you and your child**. With open communication and a shared goal, we can ensure your child gets the support they need to succeed. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to reach out – we are here to help.