

Specialist hub of inclusive practice (SHIP)

Information for parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

2025/2026



What is a SHIP?

A SHIP is a specialist provision within a mainstream school that enables children with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities to have access to individualised and small group support whilst also benefiting from inclusive practice within the mainstream setting. SHIPs are part of the local authority programme of specialist resource bases (SRBs).

Who is a SHIP for?

SHIPs are special provisions for children who find learning in a regular classroom difficult. They support children with significant learning needs, as well as challenges like neurodiversity, social and emotional difficulties, and developmental delays. SHIPs offer a safe, supportive space where children can learn and thrive.

Why is my child being considered for a SHIP?

Your child has been identified because they have special educational needs that could possibly make them suitable for a place in a SHIP, and additionally:

- They already receive a level of support in their current setting
- They still find accessing the mainstream class challenging
- They would benefit from, and could access, some aspects of the mainstream provision with the right support of the SHIP model.

What benefits would my child get from attending a SHIP?

- Your child will be placed in a specialist provision while attending a mainstream school, with access to mainstream activities and learning when appropriate
- Attend school close to home where possible so that your child is able to take part in activities after school.

What can I expect if my child has been referred for a SHIP placement?

- If professionals agree that your child may benefit from a place at a SHIP, a member of staff at your current setting/school will discuss next steps with you. You may also want to discuss this with your EHCP coordinator if your child has an EHCP as it may mean a change of school
- Your current school will then make a referral to the local authority for consideration of a place.
- The referral will initially be discussed at a Triage Panel. This is where the SRB/SHIP professionals discuss whether your child might benefit from the SHIP
- If Triage Panel agree your child may be suitable for a SHIP, the referral is then passed on to the Lead Teachers of the SHIPs to consider at the next admissions meeting or panel.
- If the SHIP has or will have vacancies, a teacher from the nearest SHIP will arrange to come and observe your child. They may come with another professional.
- If the SHIP is currently full, a decision around suitability or consideration of an alternative SHIP will be made at the Admissions meeting. A re-referral will be recommended if suitability is agreed.
- The professionals observing will work with your child's current setting or school to make sure that the observation takes place at a time that works for them and for your child
- As part of the observation, they may speak to your child, and they will speak to the staff who support your child

What happens next?

Once an observation has been made of your child, observation notes are added to the information already available. Professionals will then discuss whether your child could benefit from a place at the next SHIP Admissions Panel

What happens if professionals agree that a place should be offered to your child?

If the SHIP Admissions Panel agree that a place will be offered to your child, you will receive a letter that you will need to respond to. Your child's current setting/school will also be informed of the offer. You may wish to discuss this with your child's current setting/school before you accept the place.

Here are some things that might help you to decide:

- Go and visit the school and meet with the staff
- Have a look at the school website and read the school's SEN information report
- Talk to someone who knows you and your child at the current school/setting
- Write a list of all of your questions and meet with the SHIP teacher to discuss them

What happens if my child is not offered a place?

If your child is not offered a place in a SHIP, your school and/or EHCP Coordinator will be informed, and they will then share with you the reasons why and next steps. In all our processes your child remains at the heart of our decision making. There are some factors that will have contributed to the decision made, these include:

- After observation and discussion, the professionals all agree that this would not be the right setting for your child.
- The SHIP provision is already full.
- Professionals agree the current setting could meet need by implementing suggested strategies recommended by professionals.