Understanding the GDA Process

GDA stands for General Development Assessment as is the process of referring children who parents, carers or other professionals suspect may need an assessment for ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or ADD – Attention Deficit Disorder.

Although many people take their children to the doctor it is school who need to make the referral. This is because we see children for long periods of time and are able to make detailed observations of them. School are therefore advised that even if a doctor or paediatrician suggests a GDA referral, school must show whether there is enough evidence to proceed.

Who makes the referral

Mrs Sophie Scurfield

Assistant Principal EYFS Leader SENDCO

I am the school Special Educational Needs Coordinator. It is my job to support parents in understanding how the GDA referral process works and what will make a successful application

Contact me:
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How is a referral made?

The referral is now a 16 page word document, 10 pages for school to complete, 6 pages for parents and carers' thoughts and observation. It is therefore not a quick tick box exercise and school are advised to take time in ensuring they have gathered enough information. This may take a number of months.

Why do they need so much information?

A group of specialists need to decide whether the signs and symptoms that are being described are not evidence of other issues such as trauma, poor behavior management, emotional attachment to adults or other difficulties. Without a high level of detail, the referral will be returned which can be very disappointing for parents and carers.

What evidence may they need from parents?

School may ask you to complete:

- Solihull Online Parenting Course
- Early Help Referral

These will provide further evidence to the team that you are aware of strategies to manage behaviours and have trialled and applied these.

What evidence may they need from school?

School will need at least 2 rounds of SEN Support Plans to show strategies have been trialled and reviewed. This would usually take around 6 months.

School may need to make a referral to a specialist team who become involved in SEN Support Plan review meetings and may observe your child and or support staff in school.

School may also send other information such as a sensory profile and behaviour records.

Currently only 1 in 4 cases are successfully progressing to a GDA assessment.

The GDA Team are asking schools for considerable amounts of supporting evidence. Please be patient with us whilst we work on acquiring this.

How do I fill out the forms?

You can come into school to complete the forms with the SENCo. Some parents do however prefer to complete them at home, where they can think about the questions and answer them over time.

How long will it take to find out?

In recent years, from submitting the referral to a diagnosis has taken up to 3 years. The team have made changes to reduce this time considerably, so you should know if the referral will proceed after a few months.

Where are the assessments carried out?

If your child proceeds on the pathway all correspondence and appointments will come through medical services, school will mainly not be aware of the stages of the referral unless you share this with them.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any matter in this brochure in more depth.

Sophie Scurfield – Assistant Principal, EYFS Leader SEND & Inclusion

Carr Lodge Academy