

SEND AND SCHOOL · GUIDE 1

What does SEND mean?



SHORT ANSWER

SEND stands for **special educational needs and disabilities** (sometimes shortened to SEN). It describes learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for a child to learn than most children of the same age. Children with SEND are likely to need extra or different help with their learning.

Good to know

A child is **not** considered to have SEND just because their first language is not English — although some children who speak English as an additional language may also have SEND.

Some children have SEND because of a medical condition or disability. Others have SEND **without any formal diagnosis**. All children struggle with learning sometimes; SEND means a child needs support beyond the help that teachers and family can usually give.

Examples of SEND

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| ☐ Autism, including Asperger syndrome. | ☐ Speech, language and communication difficulties. |
| ☐ Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (ADHD/ADD). | ☐ Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). |
| ☐ Emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). | ☐ Medical needs, such as epilepsy or cerebral palsy. |
| ☐ Specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia. | ☐ Mobility or other physical difficulties. |

Where a child might need extra help

- ☐ Reading, writing, numeracy or understanding information.
- ☐ Expressing themselves or understanding what others say.
- ☐ Making friends or relating to adults.
- ☐ Behaving appropriately in school.
- ☐ Organising themselves and their work.
- ☐ Sensory or physical needs that affect their school day.

Support schools can provide

The law says every state school must use its **best endeavours** to make sure children with SEND get the support they need. Most children's needs can be met by their mainstream school, sometimes with help from outside specialists. Support is matched to each child and can include:

- ☐ Special learning programmes.
- ☐ Extra help from a teacher or learning support assistant.
- ☐ Working in smaller groups.
- ☐ Classroom or break-time observation.
- ☐ Help joining in with class activities.
- ☐ Extra encouragement, for example to ask questions or try harder tasks.
- ☐ Support communicating with other children.
- ☐ Help with physical or personal care needs, such as eating, moving safely around school or using the toilet.

Every school has its own approach. Many offer on-site support such as Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) or counselling, and schools can help your child access CAMHS or other outside services. Ask to speak to the school's **SENCO** (special educational needs coordinator) — they lead on SEND support.

How support is planned

Schools follow a cycle called **assess, plan, do, review** (often called SEN support). Your child's needs are assessed, a plan is agreed with you, the support is put in place, and progress is reviewed. You should be involved at every stage. Your council's **Local Offer** website lists the SEND support available in your area.

If mainstream school cannot meet your child's needs

Sometimes a child may spend time in a school or setting that can better meet their needs and abilities. Between the ages of 5 and 16 your child must still be in education — and that includes alternative schools and other settings. If a child needs more help than a school can provide from its own budget and staff, the council may carry out an assessment for an **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** — see our guide *What is an EHCP?*

Need advice?

Call The Traveller Movement on **020 7607 2002** or email us at **info@travellermovement.org.uk**