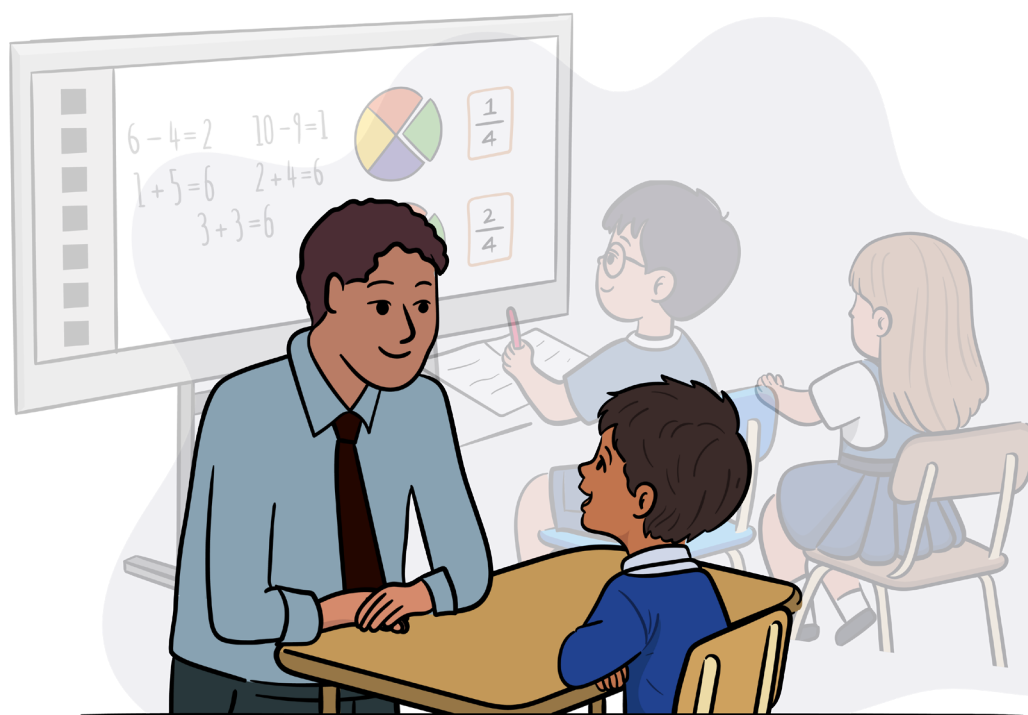


SEND Provision Guidance for Families

February 2026



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What can you expect if your child needs extra support at school?

In England, schools must provide extra care and support for children and young people who need it. Your child might struggle to read, or might need to move around in a wheelchair, or might find it hard to make friends with other children, for example. If you had to leave your country – for example, because of a conflict or because it was not safe – your child might feel anxious and sad.

Your child's school must find out about the difficulties that your child has, and they must provide extra help so your child can learn and feel comfortable and included at school. Each school works a bit differently in the way they support children and young people, but your child has a right to be at school and to get the help that they need.

This guidance covers:

- What will happen before your child starts at a new school;
- What will happen after your child starts at school;
- Where you can get help outside school;
- Some words and phrases you might hear, and what they mean.

In this guidance, words and phrases that might be new to you are **highlighted like this**. There is a glossary at the end of the guidance, on [page 8](#), which will tell you the meaning of these words and phrases, as well as some others you might hear. If you are reading this on a screen, you can click or tap on the words to go straight to the glossary.

What will happen before your child starts at a new school?

The first interview

Before your child starts at the new school, you will meet with a staff member. This meeting is important. It is a chance for you to tell the school about your child, their difficulties, and the help they need. The school needs this information to plan the best help for your child.

You can ask for the meeting to be in a quiet, private room. If you are worried about being able to understand or speak in English, ask the school for help. The school may be able to provide a human interpreter (either in the room with you or by telephone or video), or they can use translation tools on a computer or phone app. You can also ask to bring a family member or close friend to the meeting to help. This is especially helpful if they understand the English education system. Bring any documents or reports about your child's difficulties, and information about any help they have received before.

You can ask these questions in the interview:

1. Who is the school's **SENDCo**, and how can I contact them? Can I have a photo of the SENDCo?
2. Who is my child's class teacher (for primary school), or year leader (for secondary school), or **key worker**? How can I contact them?
3. Can I have a visual guide, with labels that are translated, to show the important places in the school where my child needs to be?
4. Can I see my child's classroom and where they will sit?
5. Can I receive information from the school in the language I prefer to read?

The school might not be able to answer all your questions in the first interview. If you have more questions, ask to speak to your child's class teacher (at primary school) or year leader (at secondary school).



The school will ask you for this information in the first interview:

- **Personal and contact details:**
 - a. Your child's name and address and your contact details, such as your telephone number;
 - b. Your child's age, religion, gender, ethnicity, and their hobbies and interests.
- **Your child's background, including:**
 - a. Whether they were born in and/or have lived in different countries;
 - b. When they came to the UK;
 - c. Whether they have been to school in any other country/countries.
- **Any other relevant information about your family.** You do not have to tell the school if you are refugees or seeking asylum, but it may help the school to better support your child if they know this. You can also tell the school if your family has moved recently, as this may also be useful information.
- **Language:** Information about all the languages that your child knows and uses, including any languages they have learnt to read and write in.
- **Education:**
 - a. What schools has your child been to before?
 - b. If your child has been to another school before, what subjects did they study?
 - c. What does your child do well in, and what do they struggle with, when they are at school?
 - d. Did your child receive extra support at another school?
 - e. If your child is at secondary school, what are your child's plans for the future? What subjects do they want to study? What are their career plans?
- **Health:** Information about any medical or learning problems your child has had before, and the name and contact details of your local doctor (GP).

What will happen after your child starts school?**Assessment**

First, teachers will watch your child to make sure they are comfortable at school and that they are making friends. Teachers will also watch how your child is learning.

If the teachers see that your child is sad or anxious at school, they will contact a person who is trained to help your child to feel safe and happy at school.

Next, teachers will do language tests with your child. These are to see how your child talks and learns in their home language and how well they are learning English.

If the teachers see that your child is very new to English, they will make plans to support them to learn English.

If the teachers see that your child is struggling with talking, reading, and writing in their home language and in English, they will contact a trained person called a speech and language therapist who can come to the school to help your child.

If the teachers see that your child has other difficulties – for example, if they are struggling to hear the teacher – they will make a plan for your child to have a test. This is to check whether your child needs extra support.

The school must tell you first if your child is going to meet with a person from outside the school.

Information

If the school needs more information, they will ask you to have meetings with other staff members. This might include your child's class teacher (at primary school) or head of year (at secondary school), the [EAL Co-ordinator](#), and the SENDCo.

They will ask what help you and your child want, so that the plans they make for your child work well.

They might also ask to visit your family at home, to watch how your child plays and interacts in your family. During this visit they will also ask you questions about your child's development and whether there is anything you are worried about. This information will help the school to understand more about how your child is making progress or how they might be struggling.

Confidentiality

The school staff who work with your child must keep information about your child private. This is the same for the specialists who might come to the school to assess or work with your child. They will only share information with you and with relevant staff at the school.

Changes to help your child

The school will decide what changes they can make to help your child learn better. They will do this using information from you, your child, and any trained person who has talked to your child. The school will make any changes that are reasonable and possible for it to make (these are known as [reasonable adjustments](#)).

Help with tests and exams

The school will make plans for your child to have extra help, known as **access arrangements**, in tests and exams. For example, they may give your child a bilingual dictionary or allow them extra time to complete the test.

Subjects at secondary school

The school will enter your child for exams. These are usually GCSE qualifications and can include a GCSE in another language that your child has studied before.

Some schools offer alternative qualifications, so ask your child's school about this.

You can also look at this information: bell-foundation.org.uk/english-education-system

Where can you get help outside school?

SEND organisations

SEND organisations work with families to help their children do well at school when they have a special need or disability:

- **National Deaf Children's Society**: They work with and support families whose children are deaf (bit.ly/NDCS_homepage).
- **Barnardo's SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Advice and Support Services)**: They provide information, advice, and support to families, carers, and young people (bit.ly/Barnardos_SENDIASS).
- **Speech and Language UK**: They help families support their children if they have special needs connected to speech or language (beyond learning to use English as an additional language) (bit.ly/Speech_and_Language_UK).
- **nasen (National Association for Special Educational Needs)**: Aimed mainly at teachers and educational professionals, this organisation also provides guidance for families and carers (<https://nasen.org.uk/parents-and-carers>).

Community organisations

Members of your local community may be able to help support your child's language and other needs and can also be helpful sources of information about the education system. You can talk to people at your church, mosque, temple, or cultural community centre, or approach staff at a community school that teaches the languages your child knows.

What do the words mean?

Note: The information and definitions below were correct at the time this guidance was written, but some may change with new government policy.

The four categories of SEND

In the English education system, the types of difficulties that children and young people have are divided into four groups:



1. Communication and interaction

This group of children and young people may struggle with speech and language, and struggle to communicate, make friends, and take turns in games and tasks. These children need support in the classroom, to help them communicate and work well with others. Neurodivergent learners, including autistic learners, are in this group. These learners have different ways of thinking, understanding, and connecting with others and different strengths and abilities.



2. Cognition and learning

This group of children and young people learn more slowly than others of their age and have problems understanding and remembering information. For example, they may struggle to remember the days of the week in the right order. They may find it hard to learn their times tables or maths formulas, and may also struggle to read, write, and spell correctly.



3. Social, emotional, and mental health difficulties

This group of children and young people struggle with their emotions and feelings, which affects their relationships with others. They may feel sad or depressed and have negative feelings about themselves. They may struggle to sleep, eat, and join in with family life and with friends. They may struggle to focus on or complete schoolwork.



4. Physical and/or sensory needs

This group of children and young people struggle with movement, like walking, tying their shoelaces, or using a knife and fork. Some learners in this group struggle to see or to hear well.

Glossary

Access arrangements	Help in exams and tests, like extra time.
EAL (English as an Additional Language) learner	A learner who speaks other languages at home.
EAL Co-ordinator	Some schools have a person called an EAL Co-ordinator. This member of staff manages the work with children and young people who are multilingual and who are learning English.
EHCP (education, health, and care plan)	Some children or young people have a plan called an EHCP, which sets out what extra help and support they must get.
IEP (individual education plan)	A plan that the school makes for each learner who needs extra support. The school must talk to the learner and their family when they make the plan and show what the learner and family want.
Inclusion policy	A document that every school must have, to show how they make sure that every child or young person has the same opportunity to learn and do well.
Key worker	Some children who need extra support will have a member of staff who is assigned to help them and be the main contact for their family. This person is often called a key worker, but some schools may use a different title.
Late arrival	Learners who join a UK school for the first time when they are older and in the higher year groups.
Pastoral care	The work that staff at school do to keep children and young people safe, well, and happy. Pastoral staff can include school nurses, guidance counsellors, or teachers with special training.

Pupil passport/ profile	A school document for each learner, with their personal details, information about the languages they speak, what education they have had, and their health details.
Reasonable adjustments	When a school knows about difficulties a child or young person is having at school, it must make any plans and changes it possibly can to make sure they can learn and do their best in tests and exams.
SEN/SEND (special educational needs and disabilities)	This means any difficulty that a child or young person has. It could be struggling to learn, struggling to read, or a physical challenge, like difficulty with their hearing.
SENDCo (SEND Co-ordinator)	The SENDCo is one of the leaders in the school. They must make sure that each learner who needs support gets the right support.
SEND indicators	When a learner has difficulties at school, there are signs (indicators) to show school staff that they need help and support. For example, if a learner struggles to read in all the languages they know, they might have a problem with reading or a problem with their eyesight. The school must look for indicators to find out what the problem is.
Teaching Assistant (TA)	A person who works in the classroom, to give some learners extra help. Some TAs, but not all, are qualified teachers.