

What is the SEND Code of Practice?

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice is statutory guidance for organisations that work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

It sets out clear expectations for how schools, local authorities and partner services should identify needs, assess provision, and support children and young people with SEND.

Although the Code itself is not legislation, all organisations must have regard to it, as it is underpinned by legal duties set out in the:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014

The current version of the SEND Code of Practice was introduced in 2015, following updates to the original 2014 guidance, and remains the statutory framework that schools and services are required to follow.

Who does the SEND Code of Practice apply to?

The SEND Code of Practice applies to all education and training providers, including:

- Maintained schools, academies and free schools
- Early years settings
- Colleges and further education institutions

It is relevant to a wide range of professionals, including:

- Headteachers, principals and governing bodies
- SENCOs, teachers and support staff
- Local authority officers
- Health and social care professionals

All organisations covered by the Code are expected to work collaboratively to ensure that children and young people with SEND receive appropriate, timely and effective support.

Why is the SEND Code of Practice important?

The SEND Code of Practice promotes a consistent, fair and transparent approach to supporting children and young people with SEND, helping to ensure that pupils receive appropriate provision regardless of where they live. This reduces the risk of a 'postcode lottery' in SEND support.

During the development of the Children and Families Act 2014, parents and carers raised concerns that their voices were not always heard and that their children's needs were not consistently met. The statutory nature of the Code ensures that all professionals working with children and young people understand their legal

responsibilities and can be held accountable for meeting them.
Partnership with parents, carers and young people is a central principle of the Code.

The Four Broad Areas of Need

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) defines special educational needs as follows:

“A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.”

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or post-16 institutions.

SEND needs are grouped into four broad areas, although these often overlap and children may have needs in more than one category.

1. Communication and Interaction

Children who experience difficulties with communication or understanding language. This may include speech and language needs, autism spectrum condition (ASC), or sensory processing differences.

2. Cognition and Learning

Children who learn at a slower pace than their peers or who have specific learning difficulties, such as:

- Dyslexia (reading and spelling)
- Dyscalculia (mathematics)
- Dyspraxia (coordination)
- Dysgraphia (writing)

Some pupils may have severe learning difficulties that affect their ability to acquire basic skills across all areas of learning.

3. Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

Children who experience difficulties managing emotions or behaviour. This may include anxiety, depression, ADHD, attachment difficulties, or other mental health needs.

4. Sensory and/or Physical Needs

Children with physical or sensory impairments, such as visual or hearing impairment,

cerebral palsy, or other medical conditions that affect access to learning or the school environment.

What is an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan?

A key change introduced by the 2015 SEND Code of Practice was the replacement of Statements of SEN with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans

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An EHC Plan is a legal document issued by the local authority for children and young people whose needs require support beyond what a school or setting can normally provide.

An EHC Plan:

- Describes the child or young person's strengths and needs
- Sets out the intended outcomes
- Details the educational, health and social care provision required to meet those needs

EHC Plans are reviewed at least annually to ensure they remain appropriate and effective

What is a SEND Policy and SEND Information Report.

The SEND Code of Practice requires all education settings to publish a SEND Information Report on their website and to review it annually.

This report must include information about:

- How pupils with SEND are identified and supported
- How progress is assessed, monitored and reviewed
- Arrangements for admitting and supporting pupils with disabilities

Although schools are not legally required to have a separate SEND Policy, most schools do so as good practice. A SEND Policy clearly outlines the school's values, procedures and approach to inclusion and support for pupils with SEND.