

SEN Information Sheet

What is SEN?

Special Educational Needs (SEN) refers to children who have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than other children of the same age. These difficulties can be related to communication, behaviour, physical health, or understanding. Children with SEN might need additional support to help them learn effectively in school. 18% of children have Special Educational Needs.

SEN (Special Educational Needs)

This term refers to children who have a learning difficulty or disability that requires special educational provision to help them learn and reach their full potential.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

This term encompasses children who have both learning difficulties and disabilities that require specialised support in education, health, and social care.

While all children with SEND have SEN, not all children with SEN necessarily have a disability.

Examples of SEN/SEND

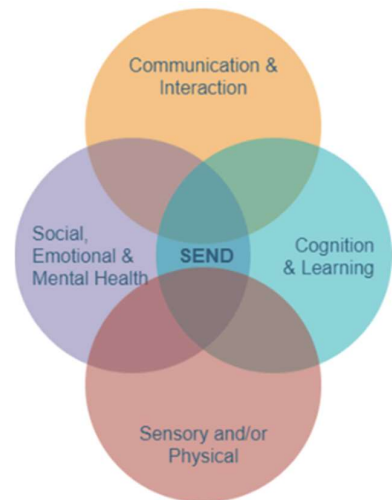
- Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)
- Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)
- Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)
- Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)
- Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia
- Autism (sometimes referred to as autistic spectrum condition (ASC) / autistic spectrum disorder (ASD))
- ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- ADD - Attention Deficit Disorder

SEN Areas of Need

The four broad areas of need are set out within the Dept for Education SEND code of practice.

The four areas of need are:

- **Communication and interaction**, which may include difficulties speaking, understanding or communicating as well as autism spectrum conditions.
- **Cognition and learning**, which may include mild learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) where children may require varying support to access their learning as well as specific learning difficulties (SpLD) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia.
- **Social, emotional, and mental health**, which may include a range of mental health difficulties such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders or physical symptoms which are medically unexplained - this could include behaviour you may find challenging, as well as conditions such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.
- **Sensory and or physical needs**, which may include a physical disability (PD) which hinders their ability to access standard provision - this may also include visual impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI).



It is important to remember that whilst these are some of the identified needs within the four broad areas of need, they are not the only needs or the only areas of support a child may require.

SEN Related staff in schools

You may come into contact with the following people in school.

- SENCO – Special Educational Needs Coordinator
- SENDCO - Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Coordinator
- Inclusion Manager
- Class Teacher
- Teaching Assistant - TA
- Learning Support Assistant – LSA
- ELSA - Emotional Literacy Support Assistant
- Educational Psychologist
- Learning Mentor
- SEN Teams

Common behaviours you may come across

Children with SEN may distribute a wide variety of behaviours. Some of the most common include:

- Difficulty paying attention
- Difficulty sitting still
- Difficulties following instructions
- Poor vocabulary
- Tiredness
- Social difficulties
- Difficulty with phonics
- Behavioural difficulties – often due to low self-esteem, fear of failure and / or frustration

Things to remember when working with children with SEN

Do:

Use people first language: A child who has SEN is not an SEN Child

Always speak to the teacher for advice: Teachers are trained to identify and support children with SEN. They can offer valuable guidance on how best to work with each child. Teachers can also provide insight into any specific strategies or approaches that should be used.

Provide extra time for processing: Children with SEN may take longer to understand instructions or complete tasks. Be patient and give them the time they need without rushing them.

Work with the children at the level that they are at: Children develop at different rates, so use appropriate questioning for their ability and not necessarily their age. "Blank levels" (Blank, Rose and Berlin [1978]) can help you to understand the development of understanding that children progress through (see below for link).

Be understanding of physical movement: Some children with SEN may find it difficult to sit still for periods of time. Allow them to move around if necessary, as it may help with focus and engagement.

Be encouraging and positive: Positive reinforcement helps build confidence. Celebrate small successes and praise effort, not just outcomes. Write positive entries in a child's reading diary / log that reflect this.

Don't:

Don't make a diagnosis: As volunteers, it is important to avoid diagnosing any learning difficulties or conditions. Leave this to the professionals. Always focus on the child's strengths and challenges, without labelling them.

Don't record any concerns: If you have any concerns about a child, speak directly to their class teacher rather than making written comments in a reading log / diary or on a sheet that other people may read.

Don't make assumptions about ability: Children with SEN may show unique strengths and challenges. Never assume what they can or cannot do based on their difficulties. Every child is different, and it is important to focus on their individual abilities and needs.

Don't overlook the child's emotions: Children with SEN may experience frustration, anxiety, or other emotions that affect their behaviour. Always approach situations with understanding and empathy.

Useful links & further information:

The 4 Areas of Need in Special Educational Needs <https://www.dunbareducation.com/blog/2022/12/sen-4-areas-of-need?source=google.com>

The four broad areas of need <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/support-for-practitioners/send-assessment/four-broad-areas>

5 Top Tips for working with children with SEN <https://www.smile-education.co.uk/blog/tips-and-tricks/our-5-top-tips-for-working-with-children-with-sen/>

Place2Be Improving children's mental health <https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

National Autistic Society <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

A leading charity for people with autism, providing resources and guidance for understanding autism and supporting autistic children.

The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust <https://www.dyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk/>

A collection of resources and organisations offering advice on supporting children with dyslexia and specific learning difficulties.

Blank levels of Questioning <https://library.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/what-are-blank-levels/>