

SEN is a broad area with lots of different kinds of need. Some children may have SEN in a specific area or need a little support to make progress, whereas others may have a range of needs or need a lot of support. Sometimes these are called complex needs.

All children and young people with SEN are entitled to extra support with learning at nursery, school or college.

There are four main areas of special educational need. Your child may have difficulties in one area, in a few areas or in all of them.

Cognition and learning

This is about how your child learns and thinks. Some learning difficulties may be obvious, whereas others aren't. Children with cognition and learning difficulties usually learn at a slower pace than other children their age.

If your child has a cognition or learning need they may:

- find reading, writing, literacy and maths more challenging than other children
- have specific difficulties such as literacy difficulties or issues learning new skills
- have strengths or difficulties with memory, organisation or planning
- have a reduced ability to learn because they have difficulty managing their emotions

Communication and interaction

This is about how your child communicates with others, their relationships and social skills. This kind of need includes:

- speech and language issues
- difficulty communicating with others, such as not being able to say what they want to
- difficulties understanding what's being said
- not understanding or using social rules
- problems understanding how relationships with other people work
- autism (ASC)

Sensory and physical

These are physical and sensory things that can make it more difficult for your child to learn in a usual school environment. This might include:

- difficulties with hearing or sight or multisensory impairment
- sensory triggers or processing difficulties
- any physical disability
- problems with fine motor skills, such as picking something up, or gross motor skills such as running and jumping

Social, emotional and mental health

These kinds of difficulties can show in lots of ways, such as a withdrawn or isolated child, or challenging and disruptive behaviour. This area of need includes things like:

- social anxiety, phobias or refusing school
- mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression or an eating disorder
- attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD)
- attachment difficulties or trauma
- self-esteem and confidence issues
- if they have tantrums or meltdowns or times when they seem to 'lose it'

Published: May 2023
Due for review: May 2025

Notes