



Department
for Education

SEND reform national conversation: Explainer for children and young people

What is SEND?

SEND stands for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It means some children and young people need extra help to learn. For example, this might be because they find communication hard or they have a disability. SEND is about making sure everyone can learn and join in school life.

Why are we talking about SEND?

The government wants to make the SEND system better. As part of this, they want to hear from families, teachers, experts, and most of all from children who find learning harder or feel left out.

Your ideas can help make sure the new system works for everyone.

What is the national conversation?

The Department for Education (DfE) is starting a big national conversation on SEND. Everyone can share their thoughts and ideas. This will help create a system that gives children and young people the best start in life, so that children can achieve and thrive regardless of their background or needs.

You can join this conversation by:

- Going to online events where you can hear more and ask questions
- Sharing your views online
- Talking about it with your school or community

How will the system change?

Changes to the SEND system will be built on 5 key ideas lots of people tell us they agree on.

1. Help early – Children should get support as soon as they need it.
2. Local schools – Children should be able learn at a school near home. Special schools will still be there for children with the most complex needs.

3. Fair support – Every school should have what it needs to help children with common needs. Parents shouldn't have to fight for support.
4. Proven help – Support should be based on things that we know really work and help children succeed.
5. Shared responsibility – Schools, health services, and families should work as a team to give children the best experience.

Tell us what you think

The government has lots of questions to help guide this conversation. Here are some questions:

- What makes you feel included at school?
- How do you think you can get help, more quickly, without having to ask for it?
- How can your school support you to learn?
- What would make your local school better for children with additional needs?

These questions are about school, but we want to hear about your experiences in nurseries and colleges too.

What happens next?

Your ideas will build a better SEND system. We will work with youth groups and charities to collect thoughts and ideas from you. In 2026, the government will share a detailed SEND plan. You will have another chance to share your views then.