

What's happening now to support children and young people with SEND in mainstream education

One in three children are identified as having special educational needs at some point in their education, but many of these children and young people are not getting the support they need to achieve and thrive.

The government has consulted on plans to address this by ending the postcode lottery of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support, boosting early identification of needs, and creating a more inclusive mainstream system that delivers high standards for all. We have received thousands of responses to our consultation and held over 200 engagement events with young people, parents and professionals across the system. We will continue to work closely with everyone with a stake in our education system to make it work for all our children.

We know that families need more support now. That is why we are investing, building capacity and upskilling the workforce before legislating. This is the right approach to deliver the scale of change families need and does not pre-empt any legislative changes – this investment in early, expert support is needed regardless. This factsheet explains the practical changes happening in mainstream nurseries, schools and colleges as announced in June 2026.

Inclusion by design

All staff are being trained to better support your child

We're making an unprecedented £200 million investment in training focusing on SEND and inclusion across all education workforces, from 0-25, from leaders to support staff.

From September 2026, initial online training will be available free of charge for those working with under-5s. The first set of materials for schools and colleges will also be published in September for everyone to use. More materials will roll out through 2026 and 2027 with fully funded training courses for teachers, leaders, lecturers, and teaching assistants, across schools and colleges beginning in autumn 2027. The training for those working with under-5s will also expand further from 2027, including in-depth webinars and a local support offer to further enable putting inclusive practice into action.

We are also making free assistive technology training available for all school staff – tools such as text-to-speech and dictation software that can build children's independence, confidence and self esteem, and help every pupil feel part of a shared classroom community.

What this means for your child: staff will be better trained to understand needs and confidently provide support earlier with proven and effective strategies.

Inclusion through funding and strategies

All mainstream schools must develop an inclusion strategy – a published plan setting out how they are designing and delivering education that works for all children and young people, including those with SEND. This includes considering how their funding can support that vision.

We've given them guidance on what this strategy needs to cover. Strategies should:

- Identify common barriers to learning
- Set out inclusive practice to remove these barriers
- Set out how schools will support pupils with SEND without formal assessment or diagnosis
- Help schools work with families, pupils and members of the school community

Inclusion Strategies must be published by 31 December 2026.

Early Years providers, schools and colleges are receiving over £500 million per year over the next three years through the new Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) to improve support for all children and learners including those with SEND.

Early Years Providers (for example nurseries, childminders) will need to demonstrate to Local Authorities' how they have used their Inclusive Early Years Fund to deliver a high-quality offer for every child.

FE Colleges and sixth form colleges should set out how they will use IMF funding within their Accountability Statements, demonstrating how it strengthens inclusive practice and improves access, participation and outcomes. Independent Training providers should report on IMF spending through financial reporting mechanisms.

In the longer term, we're proposing to re-balance funding for SEND, directing much more of it into core budgets for schools and colleges. This will allow them to employ staff and deliver better provision and interventions for children and young people with SEND, without having to go through lengthy external processes.

What this means for your child: settings will have clear plans and funding in place to improve support for all children.

New guidance on inclusive and accessible learning environments

We know that the physical environment matters for all children and young people, especially those with SEND. New Inclusive Estates Guidance will support local areas and education settings to make their buildings and outdoor spaces more inclusive. This includes adaptations such as soft lighting to create a comfortable sensory environment, accessible changing facilities, and calm, quiet spaces that can be used flexibly to support emotional regulation, quiet study, or other needs.

This is supported by investment of £3.7 billion over five years for local areas to create suitable places for children and young people with SEND. Together, the guidance and investment will support nurseries, schools, and colleges to make practical, high-impact improvements to their 2

buildings and outdoor spaces which will make a real difference for children and young people with SEND.

What this means for your child: schools, colleges, and nurseries will increasingly provide environments that better meet children's needs.

Support for children with SEND within mainstream education

Inclusion bases

Inclusion bases are dedicated spaces within mainstream education settings that provide targeted teaching and activities, and specialist support for children who need it. These might be a separate classroom, a specialist facility, or a hub for professionals such as Educational Psychologists or Speech and Language Therapists who deliver support across the setting. They will be run by a qualified teacher, never used as a sanction, and enable access to an adapted, broad, ambitious curriculum to meet the needs of every child. Your child might access this for a short period or on an ongoing basis, alongside or instead of some or all of their mainstream lessons. Support from a base should also help children to participate in wider school life, such as extracurricular activities.

New guidance for schools – also relevant to nurseries and colleges – will help them set up high quality inclusion bases. This responds directly to what parents told us by setting clear expectations around skilled, teacher-led provision, strong partnerships with families, and bases that are fully integrated into mainstream school life.

What this means for your child: For some children, this support will enable them to gradually transition to full participation in mainstream classes. For others, ongoing support from the base will help them access mainstream learning, education and their wider community in a way that works for them.

Experts at Hand

We are investing over £1.8 billion over the next three years through the new Experts at Hand programme. This will bring experts like speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, occupational therapists and specialist teachers directly into mainstream schools, colleges and nurseries.

Rather than having to wait for support elsewhere, experts will work alongside staff in the places where children and young people already learn. The aim is to identify and support children and young people's needs earlier before problems grow. Children and young people won't need a diagnosis to access this support.

The programme is designed to strengthen existing support, not replace it, and it must never replace the support a child gets through an EHCP. Local areas will begin rolling out the first elements of their Experts at Hand offer from September 2026. Each area will focus first on the services most needed locally and build on this over time.

In the first year, support will be provided in small groups or across the whole setting, with time limited one-to-one help provided occasionally where it's most needed. Experts will also work with teachers, early years educators and support staff, helping them understand children's and young people's needs and use strategies that can make a difference within their setting.

What this means for your child: faster access to expert support in the setting they already attend.

More information

- [Every Child Achieving and Thriving Schools White Paper](#)
- [Further information and fact sheets on SEND reform](#)