

Special educational needs: an analysis and summary of data sources

Introduction and background

This report from the DfE gives an overview of the attainment, progress and destinations of children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN). It also reports on the timeframes within which statements and Education, Health and Care plans (EHC plans) have been issued. The full document provides a table listing all the data sources used in the report.

Pupils with SEN are currently categorised as either SEN support or statement/EHC care plan. For those on SEN support, different help is given from that provided as part of a school's curriculum and the class teacher and SEN coordinator may receive advice or support from outside specialists. This category has replaced the former 'school action' and 'school action plus' categories. A pupil has a statement of SEN or and EHC plan when one has been issued by the local authority following a formal assessment. This document sets out the child's or young person's needs and the extra help which they should receive. The EHC plan replaced the statement of SEN in September 2014 and by April 2018, all statements will have been transferred to EHC plans. The government's aim, in introducing EHC plans, was to consider the child's or young person's needs across the areas of education, health and care as well as to give families a greater say in how the available funding should be spent.

Key findings

Prevalence and characteristics: key trends

- Across all schools, the number of pupils with SEN has fallen from 1,301,445 (15.4% of all pupils) in 2015 to 1,228,785 in 2016 (14.4% of all pupils). This reduction is driven by a decline in the number and percentage of pupils with SEN without a statement or EHC plan (down from 18.3% of pupils in 2010 to 11.6% in 2016).
- In 2016, 236,805 pupils had a statement or EHC plan. This is an increase of 640 since 2015, but still represents 2.8 per cent of the total pupil population.
- The most common overall primary type of need amongst SEN pupils is Moderate Learning Difficulty; 24.2 per cent of pupils with special educational needs have this need.
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder remains the most common primary type of need for pupils with a statement or EHC plan; 25.9 per cent of pupils with a statement or EHC plan have this primary type of need.
- Special educational needs remain more prevalent in boys than girls; 14.7 per cent of boys are on SEN support compared to 8.2% of girls. This is a reduction from last year when 16.0% of boys and 9.2% of girls were on SEN support. With statements and EHC plans there is a wide gender gap (4% of boys compared to 1.5% of girls). This has fallen very slightly from 4.1 per cent of boys and 1.6 per cent of girls in 2015.
- Pupils with SEN are more likely to be eligible for free school meals. Just over 27 per cent of pupils with SEN were eligible for free school meals in 2016 compared to 12.1 per cent of their peers without SEN. Those with statements or EHC plans are more likely to be eligible for free school meals than those on SEN support.
- SEN is most prevalent in Travellers of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupils with 35.5 per cent and 30.9 per cent respectively having SEN in 2016. Travellers of Irish heritage and Black Caribbean pupils had the highest proportion of pupils with statements or EHC plans (4.7% and 4.2% respectively). Indian pupils had the lowest percentage of pupils with statements or EHC plans at 1.9 per cent, compared with 2.8 per cent of all pupils nationally.
- Pupils whose first language is known to be English were more likely to have SEN in 2016 than those whose first language is known to be other than English (15.5% vs 13.6%).
- The percentage of pupils with a statement or EHC plan attending state-funded special schools has gradually increased each year. In 2010, 38.2 per cent of pupils with statements attended state-funded special schools and this has increased to 42.9 per cent of pupils with statements or EHC plans in 2016. The percentage of pupils with statements or EHC plans attending independent schools has also increased.
- Of those children who had been looked after continuously for 12 months and for whom data were available, 57.3 per cent had a special educational need (SEN) in 2015-16, which consists of 27 per cent with a statement or EHC plan and 30.4 per cent on SEN support.

Attainment across phases

- Twenty-three per cent of pupils with SEN achieved a good level of early years development in 2015-16; this is 52 percentage points lower than pupils without SEN (75%).
- The attainment gap in 2015-16 for the key stage 1 phonics screening check was 44 percentage points with 42 per cent of pupils with SEN meeting the required standard compared to 86 per cent of pupils with no SEN.
- Pupils with SEN performed significantly worse than pupils without SEN at key stage 1. The attainment gap is largest in writing (54 percentage points), and smallest in science (47 percentage points).
- In 2015-16, 14 per cent of pupils with SEN achieved the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 compared to 62 per cent of those with no SEN.
- Pupils with SEN have lower progress scores at key stage 2 compared to those with no SEN. The progress score for reading is -1.5 for SEN pupils and 0.3 for those with no SEN; for writing the progress score is -2.6 for SEN pupils and 0.5 for those with no SEN and for mathematics the progress score is -1.4 for SEN pupils and 0.3 for those with no SEN.
- At key stage 4, the attainment 8 score for pupils with SEN in 2015-16 was 31.2 compared to 53.2 for those with no SEN. The progress 8 score for pupils with SEN was -0.55 compared to 0.06 for those with no SEN, indicating that pupils with SEN achieve on average half a grade lower per subject than other pupils with the same key stage 2 attainment.
- Of pupils with SEN, 32.9 per cent achieved Level 2 including English and mathematics by age 19 in 2015-16, which is 45.1 percentage points lower than pupils without SEN (78.1%).

Preparation for adulthood

- In June 2016, 86.8 per cent of 16-17 year olds with SEN with a statement or EHC plan were in education and training; this is 4.4 percentage points lower than those without SEN (91.2%).
- In 2014-15, 91 per cent of pupils with a statement were in a sustained education or employment/ training destination six months after completing key stage 4, compared to 88 per cent of pupils with SEN without statements and 95% of those without SEN.
- In 2014-15, after taking A levels or other level 3 qualifications, 86 per cent of pupils with SEN in schools progressed to a sustained education or employment/ training destination six months after completing key stage 5, compared to 90 per cent of those without SEN.
- In the 2015-16 financial year, 5.8 per cent of adults with learning disabilities aged 18-64 who were receiving support from social services were in paid employment, compared to 6 per cent in the previous year.
- Eighty-four per cent of those with Learning Difficulty or Disability (LDD) in colleges progressed to a sustained education or employment/ training destination compared to 86% of those without LDD.

Absence and exclusions

- Absence rates are considerably higher for all categories of pupils with SEN. In 2015-16, pupils with statements or EHC plans missed 7.7 per cent of sessions; the figure for pupils on SEN support was 6.2 per cent and for pupils without SEN, it was 4.2 per cent.
- In 2015-16, 22.6 per cent of pupils with a statement or EHC plan were persistent absentees (i.e. they missed more than 10 per cent of possible sessions in the school year). This figure compares to 17.5 per cent of pupils on SEN support and 8.8 per cent of those without SEN.
- In 2014-15, the permanent exclusion rate was highest for pupils on SEN support (0.29% compared to 0.16% for those with statements or EHC plans and 0.04% for those with no SEN). In 2014-15, 5.58 per cent of pupils on SEN support received one or more fixed period exclusion compared to 6.32 per cent of pupils with statements or EHC plans and 1.29 per cent of pupils with no SEN. Pupils with SEN accounted for just over half of all permanent exclusions and fixed period exclusions.

Efficiency of the SEND system and appeals

- There were 175,233 statutory EHC plans and 112,057 statements maintained by local authorities at January 2017. This gives a combined total of 287,290. The total of statements and EHC plans has increased each year since 2010.
- There were 36,094 new EHC plans made during 2016; no new statements were made during this period. The number of new EHC plans made during 2016 is greater than the combined number of new statements and EHC plans in 2015 (27,923). Between January 2016 and January 2017 there were 59,545 transfers from statements to EHC plans. When accounting for null returns, this is equal to 32.7 per cent of the statements in place in January 2016.
- Of the new EHC plans made during 2016 (excluding cases where exceptions apply), 58.6 per cent were issued within the 20 week time limit, slightly fewer than in 2015. The percentage of EHC plans completed within the time limits is lower than the percentage of statements issued within the time limits in previous years. This may be because of local authorities needing time to adjust to the new system.
- Parents/ carers and young people can register an appeal with the SEND tribunal if there is a refusal to assess or they are unhappy about the contents of the plan. There were 3,712 appeals registered in 2015-16, which is equivalent to around 4.3 appeals per 10,000 of the school population. This is an increase compared to the previous year when there were 3,147 appeals registered equivalent to 3.7 per 10,000 of the school population. A total of 3,154 outcomes were recorded for SEN appeals; this is similar to previous years. In 2015-16, 54 per cent of appeals were against the contents of the statement and 32 per cent were against a refusal to assess. Twenty-eight per cent of the appeals were decided at tribunal and the remaining 72 per cent of were withdrawn or conceded.

The full document can be downloaded from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sen-analysis-and-summary-of-data-sources>