



South Tyneside Council



SEND In Mainstream Settings Guide August 2026

For Parents & Carers of Children & Young People
with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities



**South Tyneside Council
knows every child is different,
so the support your child
receives should be based on
their individual strengths,
needs and circumstances.**

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Welcome

The SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework has been developed for education professionals. It helps schools think about how to identify needs, plan support and review whether that support is working.

This parent and carer guide has been written to help families understand what support might look like in practice. It gives examples of the type of provision that may be available at each Tier of support.

Every child is different, so the support your child receives should be based on their individual strengths, needs and circumstances. If your child is receiving support at Targeted Tier or above, the school should be able to explain in more detail what provision is being put in place, why it is needed, how it will be reviewed, and how you and your child will be involved.

This guide explains:

- what Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are;
- how schools identify and support additional needs;
- what support you can expect from your child's school;
- how you can be involved in decisions about your child's support; and
- where to find further help and advice.

Our aim is that all children and young people feel included, valued and able to achieve their potential within their local community.

What is SEND?

A child or young person may have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) if they find learning or everyday school activities harder than most children of the same age.

Children may need support for a short period of time or throughout their education. Their needs may change over time and the support they receive should change alongside them.

SEND can include differences or difficulties relating to one or more broad areas of need. These areas help schools think about the type of support a child or young person may need, but they are not intended to be a fixed or exhaustive list.

How does support work in school?

Schools use what is known as the graduated approach to identify, understand and respond to a child or young person's needs. This is a step-by-step way of identifying needs, trying support, checking if it works and changing it if needed.

The graduated approach is often described as an **Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle**. This helps schools and families work together to understand a child's needs and agree the right support. This cycle will happen more than once.

- **Assess:** The school gathers information about what the child or young person is finding difficult and what is helping or making things harder. This should include information from parents and carers, the child or young person, school staff and, where appropriate, other professionals.
- **Plan:** The school agrees what support will be put in place, what everyone wants to improve, who will be involved, and when progress will be reviewed.
- **Do:** The agreed support is put in place. This may include changes to teaching, resources, routines, extra support or the wider school environment.
- **Review:** The school looks at whether the support has made a difference and uses this to decide what should continue, change or stop.

Most children will have their needs met through high-quality teaching and inclusive practice in the classroom. Some children may require additional or more specialised support. Where this is needed, schools should continue to use the graduated approach so that support is reviewed and adapted as the child's needs change.

HELPFUL Q&A

What is the graduated approach?

This is a step-by-step way of identifying needs, trying support, checking if it works and changing it if needed. The tiers describe how much support a child may need.

What does inclusive practice mean?

Inclusive practice means ways of teaching and supporting children so everyone can take part.

What happens if support isn't working?

Support should be reviewed regularly to make sure it is helping your child make progress, feel happy and take part in school life.

If support is not helping as expected, schools and settings should work with you to understand why and decide what changes may help.

The aim is always to make sure your child receives the right support at the right time.

Understanding the Tiers of Support

Within the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework, there are tiers of support. These describe the level of support a child may need at a particular point in time.

All the tiers in this guide relate to support available within mainstream schools and settings. Even where a child requires Specialist support, this does not automatically mean they need an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) or a place in a specialist school.

Every child is different, and support may look different even for children who are at the same tier. The aim is always to make sure the right support is in place, reviewed regularly and adapted when needed.



IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

The framework helps schools and settings think about the support a child needs at a particular point in time. Every child is different, and support may look different even for children who are at the same tier.

- The tiers describe the support a child may need, not the child themselves.
- Children do not move through the tiers like steps on a ladder.
- Support may increase, decrease or change over time.
- Before considering a different Tier of support, schools and settings should review how well current support is working and whether it has been used consistently.

How do decisions about support get made?

The framework is not designed to move children through a series of Tiers. Instead, it helps schools and settings think about the type and level of support a child needs at any given time.

Before considering whether a different Tier of support is needed, schools and settings should review how well existing support has been put in place and whether it is helping your child make progress.

Universal

What is it?

Universal support is what is known as Quality-First Teaching (QFT) and inclusive practice that should be available for all children in every classroom. This includes approaches that any teacher can use as part of everyday teaching without needing a separate plan for one child.

What might this look like?

- Classrooms are calm, predictable and welcoming.
- Teachers use a range of teaching approaches to support understanding and participation.
- Visual supports, clear routines and teaching matched to different needs are used every day.
- Expectations are adapted appropriately to ensure all children can engage and succeed.
- Positive relationships and effective behaviour support are evident throughout the setting.
- Children can take part in learning alongside their peers through high-quality teaching and changes that help them access school fairly.

What does this mean for my child?

Most children, including many with additional needs, will benefit from these approaches as part of everyday classroom practice.

Universal Plus

What is it?

Universal Plus support includes extra strategies, activities and resources that schools are expected to provide. This support builds on everyday classroom teaching and uses the staff, resources and approaches schools are expected to have.

What might this look like?

- Extra support and activities that are available in school are used alongside everyday classroom teaching.
- Staff use extra strategies, resources and changes to reduce the things that are making learning harder.
- Progress is monitored more closely and support is reviewed regularly.
- Individual strategies are consistently applied across lessons and routines.
- The child receives appropriate additional support whilst remaining fully included within everyday school experiences.

What does this mean for my child?

Your child may receive additional support beyond everyday classroom teaching, but this is still part of what schools would provide without needing specialist services to become involved.

Targeted

What is it?

Targeted support is provided when a child needs support that is more planned and individual than what is usually available in class. This support may require additional staffing, resources or more personalised planning, but remains within the scope of what the school can deliver.

What might this look like?

- Support is increasingly personalised to meet the child's specific needs.
- Individual targets and strategies inform planning and daily practice.
- Additional staffing, resources or extra support are used to help with agreed goals.
- Adults provide more structured support in specific situations where barriers arise.
- Adaptations are tailored to the child's strengths and needs rather than applied universally.
- Progress is reviewed through a planned assess-plan-do-review cycle with adjustments made when required.

What does this mean for my child?

Your child may require support that is specifically tailored to their needs and involves additional resources or planning from the school.

HELPFUL Q&A

What does personalised mean?

Personalised means adjusted or adapted to fit an individual child. Children learn, communicate and respond in different ways. Personalised support means making changes based on what works best for that child.

Targeted Plus

What is it?

Targeted Plus support is appropriate when schools need advice or short-term support from specialist professionals to help meet a child's needs. The school remains responsible for delivering support, but this is informed by specialist expertise.

What might this look like?

- Specialist advice is used in everyday practice and routines.
- Staff consistently implement agreed strategies recommended by external professionals.
- Visual supports, communication approaches, sensory strategies or tools that help pupils feel calm, safe and ready to learn are used throughout the school day.
- The environment is thoughtfully adapted to reduce barriers linked to communication, learning, emotional wellbeing or sensory needs.
- Additional adult support is planned and purposeful, with a focus on developing independence.
- Support is regularly reviewed with parents and informed by specialist assessment, advice or time-limited intervention.

What does this mean for my child?

Specialists may help schools and families understand a child's needs better and suggest ways to support them in everyday school life.

Specialist In Mainstream

What is it?

Some children and young people may need a higher level of support because their needs are more significant, complex or long-term.

Within this framework, Specialist describes the level of support a child may need within a mainstream school or setting. It does not automatically mean a child requires an EHCP or a place in specialist school to receive that support.

Specialist support is planned around the child's individual strengths and needs and may involve advice, assessment or ongoing involvement from specialist professionals working alongside the school, child and family.



What might this look like?

- Provision is highly personalised and significantly different from that provided for most pupils.
- Education, health and care professionals work together to plan, deliver and review support.
- Specialist approaches are integrated throughout the child's day and across different environments.
- Adults receive ongoing specialist guidance to ensure support remains effective and consistent.
- The learning environment, curriculum and routines are extensively adapted to meet complex needs.
- Support is coordinated around long-term outcomes and regularly reviewed through multi-agency planning.

Some children receiving Specialist support may have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), although this is not always the case.

What does this mean for my child?

Your child may require support from several professionals working together to help them access learning, develop independence and achieve positive outcomes.

When might my child be placed on the SEN Register?

Schools keep a record of children and young people who need special educational provision. This is often called the SEN Register.

A child or young person should usually be placed on the SEN Register when they have special educational needs that require support which is additional to, or different from, what is available through everyday classroom teaching and inclusive practice.

In this guide, this will usually be when a child needs support at Targeted tier or above. This means the child's needs have continued over time, even though high-quality teaching and earlier support have been put in place and reviewed.

Being on the SEN Register should not be based only on a diagnosis, label or one assessment. It should be based on a clear understanding of the child's strengths, needs and the impact these have on learning, participation, wellbeing or independence.

If your child is placed on the SEN Register, the school should explain why, what support will be put in place, how progress will be reviewed, and how you and your child will be involved.

HELPFUL Q&A

What is multi-agency planning?

Multi-agency planning means different professionals, such as teachers, health professionals and support services, working together to help your child.

Working Together

Parents and carers know their children best. The information you share about your child's strengths, interests, worries and experiences is an important part of understanding their needs and planning effective support.

What should I expect from my child's school?

Parents and carers should expect schools to work with them in an open, respectful and ongoing partnership. This means schools should not only tell families what support is in place but also listen to what parents and carers know about their child and use this information to help understand needs and plan support.

- listen to parents and carers and take their views seriously;
- involve parents and carers in discussions about their child's strengths, needs and support;
- explain clearly what support is being put in place and why;
- share information about progress, wellbeing and any concerns in a timely way;
- use the information parents and carers share as part of assessment, planning and review;
- review support together and agree what should continue, change or stop;
- be clear about next steps, including when further advice or specialist support may be needed.

Successful support is most effective when schools, families and professionals work together.

Masking: When School & Home Look Different

Sometimes children and young people may appear to manage well in school, but this does not always show the full picture of how they are feeling or coping. Some children may hide how difficult they are finding things during the school day and then show signs of distress, exhaustion or overwhelm at home.

Schools can only assess what they are able to see and observe in the school environment, but they should also listen carefully to what parents and carers share about how their child acts, feels or copes at home and in the community. This information is important because it helps build a fuller understanding of the child's needs, wellbeing and the impact of the school day.

Where there are differences between school and home, this should be explored through open conversation as part of the school's step-by-step support process. Schools and families should keep talking openly about the child's experiences, celebrating strengths, identifying difficulties and reviewing support as needs change.



Early Years

This section is for families with children in Early Years settings. The tables show how support may build across each area of need as a child’s strengths and needs become clearer. Support at each tier builds on what is already in place, with more personalised approaches, resources or specialist advice added when needed.

Cognition & Learning

This may include differences in early learning through play, attention, listening, remembering routines, understanding simple ideas, problem-solving, early literacy and early number skills.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Children learn through play, exploration, stories, songs, hands-on activities and everyday routines. - Adults use clear modelling, simple language, repetition, visual prompts and practical resources to help children understand what to do. - Activities are broken into small steps, and children are given time to think, try things out and practise new skills.
Universal Plus	- Adults provide more focused support during play and routines where a child needs extra help to learn or remember new skills. - This may include more repetition, extra time, pre-teaching or revisiting key words and ideas, small-group activities, and adult support to help the child start, stay with or complete an activity.
Targeted	- Support is more planned and linked to specific learning needs. - Children may have regular small-group or individual activities focused on early thinking, problem-solving, attention, listening, memory, early literacy or early number skills. - Adults break learning into smaller steps, use frequent modelling and practise skills across different play activities and routines.
Targeted Plus	- Children receive more frequent and structured adult-led support, often daily or across several sessions. - Learning is broken into very small steps and revisited often so the child can remember, practise and use new skills. - Adults provide more individual support to help the child take part, stay engaged, build confidence and gradually develop independence.
Specialist	- Learning is highly individualised and focused on a small number of priority developmental goals. - Support is intensive and forms a core part of the child’s day. - Adults use very small steps, repeated practice, familiar routines and carefully chosen resources to support engagement, early communication, attention, thinking skills and readiness to learn.

Communication & Interaction

This may include differences with listening, understanding words or instructions, using sounds, gestures or words to communicate, joining in play, taking turns, sharing attention, responding to others, or coping with changes in routines.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Children are supported to communicate through everyday play, routines, songs, stories and shared activities. - Adults use warm, responsive interaction, simple language, key words, gestures, visual prompts and plenty of time for children to listen, process and respond. - Adults notice and respond to children’s sounds, words, gestures, facial expressions and body language.
Universal Plus	- Adults provide more focused communication support during play and routines. - This may include extra modelling of words and phrases, repeating key vocabulary, using visual supports, giving more time to respond, checking understanding through observation, and supporting the child to join in with small-group play or interaction.
Targeted	- Communication support is planned and linked to the child’s specific needs. - Children may have regular small-group or individual activities focused on listening, attention, understanding language, using words or gestures, turn-taking, play skills or interaction with others. - Adults break communication into small steps and practise these skills across everyday routines and play.
Targeted Plus	- Children receive more frequent and structured adult support to develop communication and interaction. - Adults use agreed approaches consistently throughout the day, such as visual supports, simplified language, repeated modelling, communication prompts, alternative communication methods or structured interaction activities. - Support is planned to help the child communicate needs, join in, build confidence and gradually develop independence.
Specialist	- Communication support is highly individualised and forms a core part of the child’s day. - Support may focus on a small number of priority communication and interaction goals. - Adults use specialist advice, familiar routines, repeated practice, visual or alternative communication systems, and carefully planned opportunities to help the child understand, express themselves, interact with others and take part in learning and play.

Sensory Needs: Hearing, Vision & Multi-Sensory Impairment

This may include difficulties with hearing sounds or speech, seeing objects or people clearly, noticing what is happening around them, moving safely through the environment, joining in group routines, or learning through play and interaction.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Adults make sure the setting is accessible and communication-friendly for all children. - This includes clear speech, visual cues, predictable routines, good lighting, reduced background noise where possible, and making sure children can see and hear key information during play, group times and routines.
Universal Plus	- Adults use agreed strategies more consistently where a child has mild hearing, vision or combined sensory needs. - This may include careful positioning, visual or object cues, checking the child has noticed or understood, reducing visual or noise distractions, and sharing key strategies with all adults who support the child.
Targeted	- Support is planned around the child’s specific hearing, vision or combined sensory needs. - Adults use child-specific strategies, such as adapted visual materials, clear multi-sensory communication, quieter spaces for focused activities, support to use hearing aids or visual aids, and planned opportunities to build confidence, participation and early independence.
Targeted Plus	- Specialist advice is used to adapt the environment, routines and communication more precisely. - Support may include more structured visual, auditory or tactile approaches, preparation for transitions, targeted support with equipment, reduced sensory load, and planned opportunities to practise communication, movement, play and independence across the day.
Specialist	- Support is highly individualised and often shaped by regular specialist input. - Adults use carefully planned multi-sensory experiences, specialist resources or equipment, highly predictable routines, and consistent communication approaches to help the child access learning, relationships, movement, play and early independence.

Physical & Medical

This may include difficulties with movement, balance, coordination, using hands and fingers, stamina, self-care, feeding, toileting, medical routines, or taking part safely and comfortably in play and everyday activities.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Children have regular opportunities to develop movement, coordination, strength and independence through play, outdoor learning, self-care routines and everyday activities. - Adults adapt activities where needed so children can take part safely and confidently alongside others.
Universal Plus	- Adults provide extra encouragement, modelling and practice where a child needs more help with physical skills, movement, stamina, fine motor skills or self-care. - Activities may be broken into smaller steps, adapted to reduce physical barriers, or paced to allow rest, comfort and successful participation.
Targeted	- Support is planned around specific physical, motor or medical needs. - This may include regular practice of fine or gross motor skills, adapted play or learning activities, support with dressing, toileting or feeding routines, prompts to help build independence, and planned adult support at times when the child may need extra help to join in and take part.
Targeted Plus	- Specialist advice helps shape how adults support mobility, positioning, self-care, safety, stamina and participation. - The child may need more frequent adult support, adapted equipment, individual routines, planned rest or movement opportunities, and repeated practice of independence skills across the day.
Specialist	- Support is highly individualised and forms a key part of the child’s daily provision. - Adults may support personal care, safe movement, physical access, medical routines, specialist equipment, positioning, comfort and participation, while carefully promoting independence wherever possible. - Support is planned and reviewed with family and relevant health professionals.

Sensory Processing Differences

This may include differences in how a child notices and responds to noise, light, touch, movement, smells, textures or busy spaces. Some children may feel overwhelmed or unsettled, while others may seek more movement, pressure or sensory input to help them feel calm and ready to play and learn.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- The setting provides a balance of calm, active and sensory-rich play. - Children have predictable routines, familiar adults, opportunities for movement, quiet spaces, sensory exploration and support to try sensory experiences at their own pace.
Universal Plus	- Adults plan more carefully around a child’s sensory preferences or triggers. - This may include preparing the child for changes, offering movement or calming activities at key points, reducing noise or visual clutter, using visual supports, and modelling simple ways to feel calm and ready to join in.
Targeted	- Sensory support is planned and used proactively rather than only when the child becomes overwhelmed. - Adults adapt activities, routines and environments around the child’s sensory profile, provide regular regulation opportunities, support the child to notice early signs of overwhelm, and help them re-engage with play and learning after sensory difficulty.
Targeted Plus	- Sensory regulation becomes an essential part of the child’s daily support. - Adults carefully sequence activities and transitions to manage sensory demand, provide consistent co-regulation, use agreed sensory strategies across routines, and introduce new sensory experiences gradually and at a pace the child can manage.
Specialist	- Support is highly individualised and focused on helping the child feel safe, regulated and able to engage. - Adults provide continuous access to regulation opportunities, carefully controlled environments, highly familiar routines, sensory-safe activities and intensive adult support matched to the child’s sensory and emotional state throughout the day.

HELPFUL Q&A

What is a sensory profile?
A sensory profile helps adults understand how a child responds to sensory experiences such as sound, touch, movement, light, taste and smell.

What is regulation?
Regulation is a child’s ability to manage their emotions, energy levels and behaviour so they are ready to learn, communicate and take part in daily activities.

What is co-regulation?
Co-regulation is when an adult helps a child understand and manage their feelings so that, over time, they can develop these skills for themselves.

Social, Emotional & Mental Health

This may include difficulties with feeling safe and settled, managing emotions, separating from familiar adults, coping with change, joining in play, building relationships, sharing, taking turns, or recovering after becoming upset or overwhelmed.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	Children experience warm, consistent relationships with familiar adults. Adults use calm voices, predictable routines, clear expectations, stories, play and everyday moments to help children recognise feelings, share, take turns, manage small frustrations and build relationships with other children.
Universal Plus	- Adults provide more planned support where a child needs extra help with emotions, confidence, transitions or social play. - This may include emotional check-ins, visual prompts, preparation for changes, adult modelling during play, support to join in with other children, and planned calming or regulation activities within the day.
Targeted	- Support is planned around the child’s specific social and emotional needs. - Adults may use individual routines, named feelings, simple regulation strategies, supported play, social stories, trusted adult check-ins, and planned support during times the child finds difficult, such as arrival, group time, transitions or unstructured play.
Targeted Plus	- Children receive more consistent and structured adult support to help them feel safe, regulated and ready to engage. - Adults use agreed approaches throughout the day, such as co-regulation, predictable scripts, reduced demands when the child is overwhelmed, planned recovery time, carefully structured play opportunities and support to gradually manage social or emotional demands.
Specialist	- Support is highly individualised and focused first on emotional safety, trust and regulation. - The child may need familiar adults, highly predictable routines, short and carefully planned learning or play activities, regular recovery time, low-demand spaces and support shaped by specialist advice. - Progress may be seen through small steps such as accepting support, staying regulated for longer, joining in briefly, communicating feelings or beginning to trust adults and peers.

School Aged Children & Young People

This section is for families with children aged 5–16. The tables show how support may build across each area of need as children move through primary and secondary school. Support at each tier builds on what is already in place, with more personalised approaches, resources or specialist advice added when needed.

Cognition & Learning

This may include differences with reading, writing, number work, memory, concentration, processing information, or learning at the same pace as others.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Teachers break learning into clear, manageable steps and explain new ideas using modelling, examples, visuals and practical resources. - Pupils have regular chances to revisit previous learning, practise key skills and show what they know in different ways, such as speaking, writing, drawing, using technology or practical activities.
Universal Plus	- Pupils receive extra practice and support where gaps in learning are starting to show. - This may include pre-teaching key words or ideas, revisiting learning after lessons, small-group support, adapted worksheets, sentence starters, number lines, visual prompts or extra time to complete tasks. - Teachers check understanding more often and adjust support when needed.
Targeted	- Support is planned around specific learning needs, such as reading, writing, spelling, maths, memory, processing information, attention or organisation. - Pupils may have regular small-group or individual teaching focused on agreed targets. - Learning is broken into smaller steps, with more modelling, guided practice, repetition and resources to help pupils remember and apply skills across lessons.
Targeted Plus	- Specialist advice helps shape how learning is planned and delivered. - Pupils may need more frequent adult support, highly structured activities, personalised resources, assistive technology, adapted ways of recording work, or alternative ways to record learning. Support focuses on helping the pupil access the curriculum, build confidence, develop independence and secure key skills over time.
Specialist	Learning is highly personalised and based on a detailed understanding of the pupil's strengths and needs. Teaching may focus on a small number of priority learning goals, with significant adaptation to curriculum content, pace, resources and expectations. Support may include specialist teaching approaches, assistive technology, regular review with professionals and carefully planned support to help the pupil take part in learning as independently as possible.

HELPFUL Q&A

What is Assistive Technology?

Assistive technology is equipment or software that helps a child communicate, learn, access information or complete tasks more independently. Examples may include speech-to-text software, communication devices or reading support tools.

Communication & Interaction: Social Communication & Interaction

This may include differences in understanding social situations, making and keeping friendships, taking turns, coping with change, or knowing how to join in with others.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Teachers use clear routines, visual prompts, simple instructions and predictable classroom expectations to support understanding. - Pupils have structured opportunities to work with others, take turns, join group activities and practise social communication as part of everyday lessons and school routines.
Universal Plus	- Pupils receive extra support where social communication differences are becoming more evident in school. - This may include preparation for changes, visual timetables, written prompts, clearer explanations of social expectations, supported group work, and adult help to understand social situations, friendships, body language or less structured times.
Targeted	- Support is planned around the pupil's specific social communication needs. - This may include personalised visual supports, social stories, comic strip conversations, conversation prompts, structured scripts, supported peer interaction, and planned support during transitions, group work or unstructured times such as break and lunch.
Targeted Plus	- Specialist advice helps staff adapt communication, routines, lessons and social situations more consistently. - Pupils may need highly structured group work, explicit teaching of social rules or "hidden expectations," predictable routines, reduced social or sensory demands, and planned support to build confidence, independence and safe participation with others.
Specialist	- Support is highly personalised and used throughout the school day. - Staff use specialist-informed approaches to support communication, relationships, emotional safety, flexibility, transitions and participation. - This may include individual communication systems, highly predictable routines, regular specialist advice, personalised social learning, and carefully planned support across lessons and social times.

Communication & Interaction: Speech, Language & Communication

This may include difficulties understanding instructions, following class discussions, learning new words, explaining ideas, organising thoughts, speaking clearly, stammering, joining in conversations, understanding written information, or communicating confidently with adults and other children.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Teachers use clear spoken and written language, visual prompts, modelling and predictable classroom routines to support understanding. - Pupils have regular opportunities to listen, talk, ask questions, explain ideas, learn new vocabulary and take part in paired, group and class discussions.
Universal Plus	- Pupils receive extra support where speech, language or communication differences are becoming more noticeable. - This may include pre-teaching key vocabulary, repeating and revisiting important words, checking understanding, giving extra thinking time, using sentence starters, visual supports, talk frames or small-group activities to build confidence.
Targeted	- Support is planned around specific speech, language or communication needs. - Pupils may have regular small-group or individual activities focused on understanding instructions, learning vocabulary, explaining ideas, sequencing information, speech sounds, listening, attention or taking part in conversations. - Adults adapt language, break information into smaller steps and practise communication skills across lessons and social situations.
Targeted Plus	- Specialist advice helps staff plan more structured support across the school day. - Pupils may need frequent adult modelling, personalised communication targets, visual or written prompts, adapted tasks, alternative ways to record ideas, communication tools or planned support to use language in lessons, group work and social situations.
Specialist	- Communication support is highly personalised and may involve regular specialist advice or programmes. - Staff use agreed approaches across home, school and professional plans to support understanding, expression, speech clarity, fluency, confidence, social communication and access to learning. - Some pupils may use alternative or additional communication systems to help them communicate effectively.

Sensory: Including Hearing, Vision & Multi-Sensory Impairment

Some children may need support because of hearing, vision or both. This can affect how they hear instructions, see information, move around school, join in lessons or take part with friends.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Teachers make sure pupils can see, hear and access information as clearly as possible. - This may include seating that helps pupils see, hear and take part, clear speech, good lighting, reduced background noise where possible, visual prompts, written key information, and checking pupils can follow instructions, discussions and learning activities.
Universal Plus	- Pupils receive extra adjustments where hearing, vision or combined sensory needs are starting to affect access. - This may include more deliberate seating, enlarged or clearer materials, visual or written instructions, support to manage hearing or vision equipment, extra time to process information, and shared strategies used by staff across lessons.
Targeted	- Support is planned around the pupil's specific hearing, vision or combined sensory needs. - Staff may use adapted resources, assistive technology, hearing aids or low vision aids, quieter spaces for focused work, pre-teaching or revisiting key information, and planned support to develop confidence, independence and participation in lessons and social times.
Targeted Plus	- Specialist advice is used to shape teaching, resources, classroom environments and access arrangements. - Pupils may need more frequent adult support, modified learning materials, assistive listening or visual technology, explicit teaching of access strategies, planned rest or reduced sensory load, and support to build independence across the school day.
Specialist	- Support is highly personalised and often involves regular specialist input. - Pupils may need specialist equipment, tactile, auditory or visual access routes, highly adapted materials, structured teaching, support with mobility or orientation, and coordinated planning between school, family and specialist services to support learning, communication, independence and wellbeing.

Physical & Medical

Physical and medical needs are about how a child’s health, movement or stamina affects their ability to take part in school. Some may need support with movement, tiredness, personal care or medical routines, or changes to equipment, activities or the school environment to join in safely.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Teachers make reasonable adjustments so pupils can take part safely and comfortably in lessons, movement around school, PE, practical activities and school routines. - This may include flexible seating, adapted tasks, rest or movement breaks, alternative ways to record work, and awareness of medical needs that may affect attendance, stamina or participation.
Universal Plus	- Pupils receive extra support where physical, motor or medical needs are starting to affect access or confidence. - This may include adapted equipment, more time for tasks, support with organisation or self-care routines, planned breaks, reduced physical demands, or small-group activities to develop fine motor, gross motor or independence skills.
Targeted	- Support is planned around specific physical, motor or medical needs. - Pupils may have targeted activities to develop handwriting, coordination, mobility, dressing, organisation or independence. - Staff may adapt PE, practical subjects, recording methods and classroom tasks, with planned adult support at key points such as transitions, personal care, movement around school or physically demanding activities.
Targeted Plus	- Specialist advice helps shape support across the school day. - Pupils may need more consistent adult support, personalised equipment, adapted furniture, alternative recording methods, ICT, planned rest or movement routines, support with mobility or personal care, and structured practice of functional independence skills. Support is reviewed with families and relevant health professionals.
Specialist	- Support is highly personalised and coordinated with health and specialist services. - Pupils may need significant adaptations to the environment, curriculum, timetable or physical activities. - Support may include specialist equipment, positioning, mobility support, medical or care routines, assistive technology, fatigue management and skilled adult support to help the pupil participate safely, comfortably and as independently as possible.

Sensory Processing Differences

Sensory processing is about how a child notices and responds to things like noise, light, touch, movement, smells or busy spaces. Some children may feel overwhelmed, distracted or unsettled by sensory information, while others may need more movement or sensory input.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Classrooms and school routines are planned to support regulation and participation for all pupils. - This may include predictable routines, clear expectations, access to movement, calm areas, reduced visual clutter and adults noticing when sensory factors such as noise, light, touch or busy spaces affect learning.
Universal Plus	- Pupils receive extra support where sensory needs are becoming more noticeable. - This may include planned movement breaks, visual timetables, access to regulation tools, quieter workspaces, preparation for changes, adjustments to seating or groupings, and adult support to help the pupil notice what helps them feel calm and ready to learn.
Targeted	- Support is planned around the pupil’s sensory profile and used consistently across lessons and key parts of the school day. - Staff may adapt tasks, routines, transitions and environments to reduce sensory overload, provide regular regulation opportunities, support the pupil to recognise early signs of overwhelm, and help them return to learning after sensory difficulty.
Targeted Plus	- Specialist advice helps staff plan sensory support more carefully across the full school day. - Pupils may need predictable access to calm or low-stimulus spaces, personalised sensory strategies, planned recovery time, reduced sensory demand, structured transitions, more frequent co-regulation, and support to build independence in managing sensory needs.
Specialist	- Support is highly personalised and forms a key part of daily provision. - Pupils may need a carefully planned sensory programme, highly adapted environments, intensive adult support, specialist equipment or resources, frequent review with professionals, and flexible expectations so they can remain safe, regulated, engaged and able to take part in learning and school life.

Social, Emotional & Mental Health

This may include difficulties with managing emotions, wellbeing, confidence, relationships, attention, or coping with change.

Tier of Support	What This Might Look Like
Universal	- Pupils experience clear routines, positive relationships and calm, consistent support from adults. - Staff use predictable expectations, emotional check-ins, praise, restorative conversations and whole-class teaching about feelings, friendships, behaviour and wellbeing to help pupils feel safe and ready to learn.
Universal Plus	- Pupils receive extra support where emotional, social or behavioural needs are becoming more noticeable. - This may include trusted adult check-ins, visual reminders, preparation for changes, supported transitions, access to quiet or calm spaces, simple regulation strategies, and small-group opportunities to build confidence, friendship skills or emotional understanding.
Targeted	- Support is planned around the pupil’s specific social, emotional or mental health needs. - Staff may use a personalised plan, agreed regulation strategies, emotion scales, social stories, structured routines, planned movement or recovery breaks, support during unstructured times, and targeted work to help the pupil manage anxiety, relationships, behaviour or emotional responses.
Targeted Plus	- Specialist advice helps staff support emotional wellbeing, safety, regulation and participation across the school day. - Pupils may need more frequent adult support, a personalised regulation plan, predictable access to a safe space, adapted tasks or timetables, structured social opportunities, planned recovery time, and regular review with family and relevant professionals.
Specialist	- Support is highly personalised and coordinated across education, health and care where needed. - The focus is on emotional safety, trusted relationships, regulation, wellbeing and gradual engagement in learning. - Pupils may need a familiar adult, low-arousal spaces, highly predictable routines, flexible expectations, specialist-informed strategies, crisis or recovery plans, and carefully planned steps back into learning and school life.

Frequently Asked Questions

This page answers some of the questions parents, carers and professionals may have about the SEND Support Framework. It explains how support is identified and provided within mainstream settings, and clarifies common misunderstandings about tiers of support, EHCPs and SEND provision.

What is an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

An EHCP is a legal document that describes a child or young person’s special educational needs and the support required to meet those needs.

Many children and young people with SEND have their needs successfully met through support available in schools and settings without requiring an EHCP. Some children with an EHCP attend mainstream school.

Does being at a higher tier mean my child will get an EHCP?

No. The tiers in this framework describe the Tier of support a child may need within a mainstream setting. They do not determine whether a child needs an EHCP. Children and young people may receive support at any tier, with or without an EHCP.

Does being at a higher tier mean my child is less able than other children?

No. The tiers are not a measure of ability, achievement or progress. They simply help schools and settings consider the level of support a child needs at a particular point in time.

Will my child move through all of the tiers?

Not necessarily. Children do not move through the tiers like steps on a ladder. The framework helps schools and settings identify the right Tier of support based on a child’s needs at a particular time.

Some children may remain at the same tier for long periods, while others may require more or less support over time.

If my child is not making progress, will they automatically move to the next tier?

Not always. Schools and settings should regularly review the support in place and whether it is meeting your child’s needs. Before considering a different Tier of support, they should look at whether current support has been implemented consistently and whether any changes or adjustments are needed.

The focus is on providing the right support, rather than moving through the tiers.

Can two children at the same tier receive different support?

Yes. Every child is different. The support provided should be personalised to a child’s individual strengths, needs and goals. This means that two children at the same tier may receive different types of support.

What does personalised support mean?

Personalised support means adapting support to suit a child's individual needs, strengths and interests. There is no single package of support attached to each tier. Schools and settings should consider what is most likely to help each individual child succeed.

How will I be involved in decisions about my child's support?

Parents and carers play an important role in understanding and supporting their child's needs. Schools and settings should work in partnership with you to understand your child's strengths and needs, plan support, review progress and discuss any changes that may be needed.

What should I do if I have concerns about my child's progress?

You should speak with your child's class teacher, key person or SENDCO. They can discuss the support currently in place, any progress being made and whether further review or changes to support are required.

Who is the SENDCO?

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO) is responsible for overseeing SEND provision in school. They work with teachers, families and other professionals to help ensure children and young people receive appropriate support.

Where can I get further help and advice?

If you would like to discuss your child's needs or support, you can speak to:

- Your child's class teacher or key person
- The school's SENDCO
- Early years staff (for younger children)
- Relevant health professionals involved with your child

Further information and support is available through:

- South Tyneside Local Offer
- SENDIASS
- South Tyneside Parent Carer Forum

What is Ordinarily Available Provision?

This refers to the strategies, approaches, resources and support that mainstream schools are expected to provide for children and young people with additional needs without requiring an EHCP.

What if I disagree with the school's assessment of my child's needs?

Start by discussing your concerns with the class teacher or SENDCO. Schools should listen to and consider the views of parents and carers. If concerns remain, schools should explain how decisions have been made and what evidence has been considered. Parents can also access independent advice through SENDIASS.

Does my child need a diagnosis to receive support?

No. Schools should identify and respond to a child's needs whether or not they have a medical diagnosis. Support should be based on the child's strengths, needs and barriers to learning.

What if my child is finding it difficult to attend school? (Emotionally based school non-attendance)

Some children and young people may find attending school difficult due to anxiety, emotional wellbeing needs, sensory differences, health needs or other factors.

Schools should work closely with families to understand the child's experiences and identify support that helps them feel safe, included and able to take part in education.

Support should focus on understanding and addressing the barriers rather than simply increasing attendance.

How are transitions supported?

Schools should plan ahead for significant changes and provide support where needed.

This may include additional visits, social stories, visual information, transition meetings or opportunities to meet key adults.

If my child is receiving Universal or Universal Plus support, why are they not on the SEN Register?

Children may receive additional support at Universal or Universal Plus tier without being placed on the SEN Register.

Universal Plus support is part of the additional strategies, resources and adaptations that schools are expected to provide when a child needs some extra help.

A child is usually placed on the SEN Register when they require special educational provision that is additional to or different from what is ordinarily available through high-quality teaching and inclusive practice, and their needs have been identified as SEND.

Decisions should be based on a clear understanding of the child's strengths, needs and barriers to learning, rather than on the Tier of support alone.



For further information:

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