

Decoding the School Census: SEN Provision and Type

Guidance for Peterborough schools on the SEND Provision and Type of the School Census

Purpose of this document:

To provide locally agreed guidance of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision and type within the school census.

Structure of this guidance:

Context	Page 1
Creating this guidance	Page 2
School census return dates	Page 2
Schools census guidance	Page 2
Good practice for recording SEN Provision and Type	Page 3
Transitions between schools	Page 4
Broad characteristics of children/young people on SEN Type within the SEN Census Categories	Page 5
English as an Additional Language	Page 8
References and sources of further guidance	Page 8

Context

The SEND Provision and Type are two parts of the pupil level data on the School Census. The school census is a statutory requirement of schools, under Section 537A of the Education Act 1996. This collection of information was historically known as the SEND register. In this document, the term 'SEND register' is used to refer to the variety of means used by schools to capture SEND pupil information.

The information collected on special educational needs via the school census provides the only individual level source of data on children and young people with special educational needs. Central and local Government, Ministers, Parliament, external organisations and the public use this data to monitor government policies and their effectiveness.

The Headteacher is responsible for the review and authorisation of census data, prior to submission to the local authority and/or direct to the Department for Education. Authorisation by the Headteacher confirms that the data submitted is accurate and correct.

Creating this guidance

This guidance was originally created in response to concerns raised by the Department for Education which the local authority shared with settings, over a concerning number of pupils registered with 'No Specialist Assessment'. Initial enquiries revealed several reasons, including some errors due to coding discrepancies on school data systems. A small working group was convened in 2018 of Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators (SENCOs) and Family Voice, with members coming from primary and secondary schools, both maintained and academies. This group discussed key information and guidance on this matter and drafted this guidance to encourage a consistent approach of best practice regarding the school census across Peterborough. This guidance was trialled with Peterborough schools during the Spring term 2019.

Following feedback from schools, this guidance was reviewed and updated. The local authority believes the guidance had a positive impact as the school census data revealed a reduction in the number of children and young people coded with NSA. However, schools are reminded that the NSA code is to be used in exceptional circumstances only. Please see the NSA detailed guidance below.

School census return dates

The deadline for all school census returns to reach the department is provided on this link: [Census dates](#)

School census guidance

The school census guidance describes the SEN Provision as:

- Special educational needs (SEN) module [ALL schools]
- Pupil SEN Type rank [ALL schools] [Pupils with SEN provision of 'E' and 'K' only] - This indicates the ranking of a pupil's special educational need, as recorded in pupil SEN type. The most significant, or primary need, is ranked as '1' with any secondary need ranked '2'. Only two rankings are collected in the school census, with no two needs given the same ranking, that is, if there is more than one SEN type reported they cannot both have a ranking of '1'.
- Pupil SEN type [ALL schools] [Pupils with SEN provision of 'E' and 'K' only] - This field records the nature (type) of a pupil's special educational need. The primary need and, where appropriate, any secondary need is recorded. As above this item is collected in the spring census and is for all pupils on roll on census day.

The Schools Census guidance describes 'Pupil SEN Provision' as:

Code	Description
N	No Special Educational Need (This includes pupils who have previously been receiving SEN support and pupils who have never had SEN support)
E	Education, Health and Care plan
K	SEN Support

(Note: E+K+N = 100% school population)

The School Census guidance describes ‘SEN type’ by the following categories:

Code	Description
SPLD	Specific learning difficulty
MLD	Moderate learning difficulty
SLD	Severe learning difficulty
PMLD	Profound & multiple learning difficulty
SEMH	Social, emotional and mental health
SLCN	Speech, language and communication needs
HI	Hearing impairment
VI	Vision impairment
MSI	Multi-sensory impairment
PD	Physical Disability
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
OTH	Other difficulty / disorder (to be applied in exceptional circumstances where the primary type of need has not yet been established)
NSA	SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need

Suggested good practice for recording SEN Provision and Type

The SEND data as part of the school census is a valuable resource to inform SENCOs, teachers and other colleagues about the pupils / students in their setting with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. When compiling this guidance, it became clear that SENCOs and education settings use the SEND Register in a variety of ways to suit their needs. However, through discussions for this document, we highlighted the following best practice:

- All teachers and support staff who work with the pupil should be made aware of their needs, outcomes sought, the support provided and any teaching strategies or approaches required. **This should be recorded on the schools information system** (chapter 6.49 SEND CoP).
- The SEND Register is a ‘live’ document. Children and young people being placed on it are not placed there permanently as their needs for support may change.
- The SEND Register should be used to record those pupils’ needs that are ‘persistent’ (i.e. needing involvement beyond the **ordinarily available provision**).
- The SEND Policy and Information Reports should reflect how the SEND provision and type is decided upon and recorded within the education setting.
- Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class including those with SEND. High quality teaching and adaptation for those individuals is the first step in responding to pupils who have or may have SEN. Additional intervention cannot compensate for lack of good quality teaching.
- Parents, Class Teachers and SENCOs must be involved in the process of identifying pupils’ SEND and the planning/reviewing of support, which may involve specialists (Section 6.45, 6.48, 6.55 of

SEND Code of Practice 2015). The SEND Code of Practice is clear that parents must be formally notified.

- Regularly (i.e. at least termly) reviewing the SEN provision and type of pupils. Making effective use of the school census to inform school history. If parents give permission, SENCOs may choose to maintain a 'monitoring list' of when pupils have SEN but not receiving interventions.
- Ensure enough time is given to review data in preparation for the census data submission deadlines.
- It may be beneficial for SEN registers to clearly reflect the primary / broad area of need and the school census codes.
- Children and young people may be placed on the SEND Register with or without diagnosis, however there should be clear evidence of needing the additional support available, e.g. test results, notes from conversations with parents, etc.
- Children and young people receiving support through interventions should not automatically be placed on the SEND Register as not all interventions are for SEND.
- Children and young people should only be placed on the SEND Register (provision and type) if they are receiving provision, not just they have a diagnosis of a SEND.
- Inspectors will consider the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in relation to the progress of all pupils nationally with similar starting points. Inspectors will examine the impact of funded support for them on removing any differences in progress and attainment. The expectation is that the identification of special educational needs leads to additional or different arrangements being made and a consequent improvement in progress.
- Whilst the SENCO is responsible for the SEND Register, some schools rely on administrative/ support staff maintaining the register using information provided to them. In these circumstances, SENCOs are encouraged to ensure there is clear understanding of the definitions, policy and practice for the register. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to authorise the school census.

Transitions between schools

When children and young people transition into schools, if they were previously identified on the SEND Register (SEND Type and Provision) (e.g., receiving SEN Support) it may be useful to maintain this to ensure they have sufficient support as they start in the school, until more up to date information on needs is gathered (See Section 6.57 of SEND Code of Practice 2015).

Broad characteristics of children/ young people on SEN Type within the SEN census categories

(Reminder - if there is no 'additional to and different from' intervention there is no SEN Type as the pupil will not be recorded as having SEN Provision)

Code	Description
SpLD - Specific Learning Difficulty	<p>'Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), affect one or more specific aspects of learning. This encompasses a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia' (Paragraph 6.31 SEND Code of Practice).</p> <p>Learners with SpLD will likely have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A diagnosis or report from professional services indicating SpLD
MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty	<p>General views on this are that the overall academic attainment of learners with MLD will be significantly lower than their peers, requiring support across the majority of their school experience. Attainment in the core subjects will be significantly below chronological age expectations (at least four years behind their peers). Typically, their cognitive ability will be below the 2nd percentile.</p>
SLD - Severe Learning Difficulty	<p>"Children and young people will be operating in the Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) cognitive range, as described below, and their ability to make progress will be limited across all areas of development. They may have a life-long learning disability which requires a multi-disciplinary service response. Children and young people will have significant impairments which may include some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Severe learning difficulties- Autistic Spectrum Disorder- Significant difficulties with communication (expressive and/or receptive language)- Severe sensory impairment. <p>This may manifest itself in some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Difficulties with appropriate social interaction and understanding- Associated challenging behaviour- Limited self-help skills and awareness of danger- Reliant on adults for activities, and travel dependent <p>Where there has been standardised testing of cognitive functioning, children and young people will be assessed as being at or below the 1st percentile.</p> <p>Pupil's attainment in the core subjects will be significantly below age expected and predominantly in the pre-key stage range as determined by teacher assessment.</p>
PMLD - Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	<p>Children and young people will be operating in the SLD or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) cognitive range as described below. They will typically have a life-long and complex learning disability which may require a multi-disciplinary service response and their ability to make progress will be severely limited across all areas of development. Children and young people will have significant and multiple impairments which may include some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- SLD- PMLD- Severe ASD

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Highly significant difficulties with communication (expressive and/or receptive language) – Complex sensory impairment <p>This may manifest itself in some or all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Considerable difficulties with appropriate social interaction, communication and understanding. – Associated challenging behaviour. – Severely limited self-help skills. – Minimal awareness of danger – Predominantly dependent on adults for personal care skills. – Reliant on adults for activities and travel dependent. <p>Where there has been standardised testing of cognitive functioning, children and young people will be assessed as being below the 1st percentile.</p> <p>Pupil's attainment in the core subjects will be significantly below age expected and predominantly in the pre-key stage range as determined by teacher assessment. Pupils with PMLD are likely to be working within the assessment range of pre-key stage 1 throughout their school career.</p> <p>Children in the nursery and EYFS age range will be functioning significantly below their chronological age in most areas of development. Reception aged children would typically be working in the birth to 12-month range of development in most areas. They may have an inconsistent developmental profile.</p> <p>(Extract from Special Schools Admission guidance - see Education page of Peterborough Local Offer - www.peterborough.gov.uk/localoffer)</p>
SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health	<p>'Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other children and young people may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder'.</p> <p>(Paragraph 6.32 SEND Code of Practice)</p>
SLCN - Speech, language and communication needs	<p>'Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) have difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them if they do not understand or use social rules of communication. The profile for every child with SLCN is different and their needs may change over time. They may have difficulty with one, some or all of the different aspects of speech, language or social communication at different times of their lives'</p> <p>(Paragraph 6.28 SEND Code of Practice).</p>
HI – Hearing Impairment/ Deaf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clinical diagnosis of bilateral (both ears) mild, moderate, severe or profound hearing loss that is permanent (sensorineural or conductive in nature).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clinical diagnosis of unilateral (one ear) mild, moderate, severe or profound hearing loss that is permanent (sensorineural or conductive in nature) – Clinical diagnosis of unilateral (one ear) or bilateral (two ears) hearing loss that is conductive, and temporary but is known to have a significant and on-going impact for the learner in accessing the curriculum and engaging in life experiences. This could include children who have current and on-going significant issues with glue ear who are awaiting grommets but these children should not be retained on the register long- term if the hearing issues are resolved.
VI - Vision impairment	<p>Clinical diagnosis of vision impairment, this means a vision diagnosis that is NOT correctable with glasses.</p> <p>A vision impairment is an impairment that could impact a child or young person's development and that requires adaptations to be made to the way learning experiences are presented to materials used or to the learning environment. For further information see Natsip - vision impairment Meeting the definition from the National Sensory Impairment Partnership: a child or young person can be considered to have a vision impairment if this interferes with optimal development, learning and achievements unless adaptations are made in the methods of presenting learning experiences, the nature of the materials used and/or the learning environment (ref. Barragan's definition cited in Flanagan et al, 2003, p 497).</p>
MSI - Multi-sensory impairment	<p>Clinical diagnosis of combined vision and hearing impairments which may include a functional loss in one or both of these senses, that create difficulty in accessing the curriculum and engaging in daily life experiences. For further information, please see Natsip - multi-sensory impairment.</p>
PD - Physical Disability	<p>Diagnosis/recognition of physical condition that affects balance, mobility, physical ability, hand function, communication, independence.</p>
ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder	<p>Learners categorised as having ASD will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have a diagnosis from CAMHS Neurodevelopmental service or comparative medical professional with report from diagnosing body. Without a diagnosis, learners must not be categorised as having ASD for the SEND aspects of the School Census. – Be accessing interventions / support (not necessarily specialist) over a medium/longer term, such as learning mentors, student support, safeguarding, Early Help Assessments, etc. – Have a primary need that creates a barrier to learning and or accessing school /curriculum. Not all learners with ASD will require SEN provision, and therefore should not be recorded on the SEND aspects of the School Census. <p>‘Children and young people with ASD... are likely to have particular difficulties with social interaction. They may also experience difficulties with language, communication and imagination, which can impact on how they relate to others’ (Paragraph 6.29 SEND Code of Practice).</p>
OTH - Other difficulty/ disorder	<p>“Children and young people for whom none of the types apply- likely to be used rarely - 4% of those with SEND nationally” (DfE feedback, November 2018)</p>

NSA - No Specialist Assessment	<p>"Schools are expected to identify a type of need for all children at SEN Support - there is no requirement for a pupil to have a specialist assessment to be recorded in the main SEN types. The No Specialist Assessment code ('NSA') should only be used in those very rare instances where a pupil is placed on SEN support (Code 'K'), but the school is still assessing what the primary need is. This might occur, for example, where a child on SEN support has transferred into the school shortly before school census day. Where code 'NSA' is to be used, the pupil MUST have SEN Provision of code 'K'. Code 'NSA' must not be used without the pupil having an appropriate SEN provision in place" (Pages 92-93 School Census Guidance 2018-2019).</p> <p><i>Contextual note:</i> 'The use of Code NSA was introduced to replace Code A (School Action) and Code P (School action plus) which were discontinued with the introduction of Code K. To ease transition, Code NSA was introduced to allow 'the school' time to arrange an assessment for the child.</p>
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English as an Additional Language

This is not classed as a special educational need or disability (SEND). The School Census has a category to describe pupils' languages and English language.

References and sources of guidance

- [Complete the school census - Guidance](#)
- [Complete the school census](#)
- [School census data items 2023 - 2024](#)
- [School census technical specification](#)
- [Ofsted School Inspection Handbook](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice](#)
- [Admissions Guidance for Peterborough Special Schools](#)
- [Mental Health and behaviour in schools - DfE March 2018](#)
- [Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire \(SDQ\)](#)
- [Special Educational Needs \(SEN\) in schools](#)
- [Local Area SEND Report DfE](#)