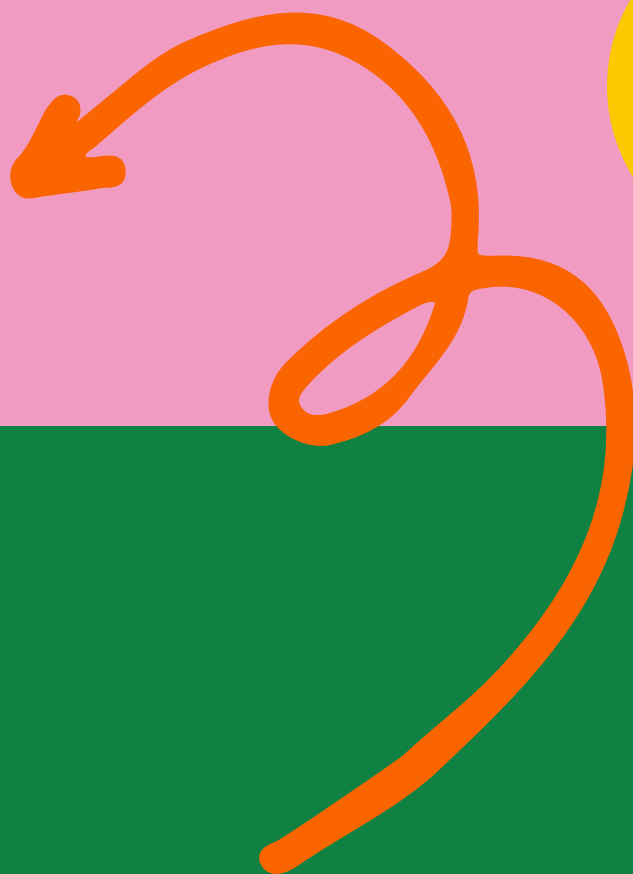
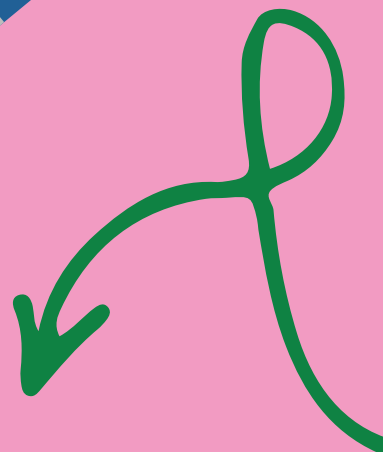
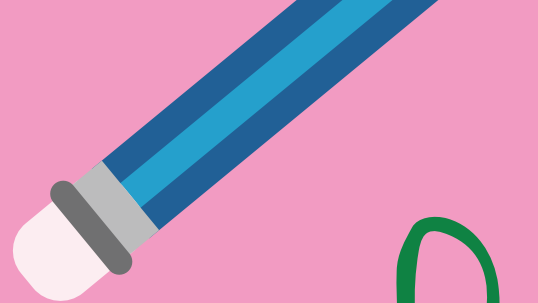


# What is education like for young people with SEND?

**Young people friendly version of:**  
Educational experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England



Office for  
National Statistics

## About this report

This report tells you about research done by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) with the support of the National Association for Special Educational Needs (nasen). We wanted to find out more about the experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in schools and other educational settings. Our findings will hopefully help decision makers as they develop new SEND policies and rules.

### Did you know?

In October 2021, the Inclusive Data Taskforce said that more children and young people should be involved in research. It also said that we should do more to understand disabled people's lived experiences. This report is one way of doing this.

## Glossary

**ONS:** Office for National Statistics

**nasen:** National Association for Special Educational Needs

**SEND:** Special educational needs and disabilities

**EHCP:** An education, health and care plan for young people with SEND who need more support than is normally available

**Educational settings:** This could be mainstream schools, special schools, alternative provision or home education

**Inclusive Data Taskforce:** A group of experts that advised us on how to make UK data more inclusive

## Our research

Listening to the voices of young people and those around them was at the heart of our research. Here is an overview of the research we did, including who we spoke to, what we asked and the methods we used.

Who took part?	What we asked	How we did it
62 young people with SEND aged 11-16 years	What is going well? What could be improved? What would your ideal school look like?	1-hour interviews using creative tools such as Lego and drawing to help get people talking
64 parents and carers	What is your experience trying to get your child the support they need?	30-minute phone interviews
23 members of educational staff	What is SEND provision like where you work?	90-minute online focus group discussions

### FACT

In this research, we asked young people to choose a fake name instead of their real name. We also used an age bracket rather than their exact age to ensure their privacy.

## What young people told us...

Young people described a range of experiences in their educational setting, affecting them in different ways.



## Helpful strategies

Young people told us about strategies they use to help them concentrate better and manage their emotions. These include:



**Wearing sunglasses or headphones**



**Doodling or fidgeting**



**Going to a safe space which was quiet and relaxing**

Young people told us that teachers sometimes think these strategies are distracting and disruptive. But when teachers understand and support these strategies, young people said they learn better and feel better. They said it also makes them more comfortable to share their feelings and ask for help.



**If you know that you have to fidget with things to concentrate, tell the teacher that you have to do this certain thing. Because if you want me to do well in your class, I'm not going to do well if I'm just sat there staring at the board.**



**Jess, 11 to 13 years old**

## Feeling included

How young people are treated at school can make a big difference. It either makes them feel they belong and fit in, or judged, left out and alone. Young people told us things that help them to feel more included.

### What can help?

- Opportunities to build friendships and feel part of the school community.
- Schools offering clubs, buddy systems and coaching to develop interaction skills, but finding what works for each individual is most important.
- Not singling young people out as different.







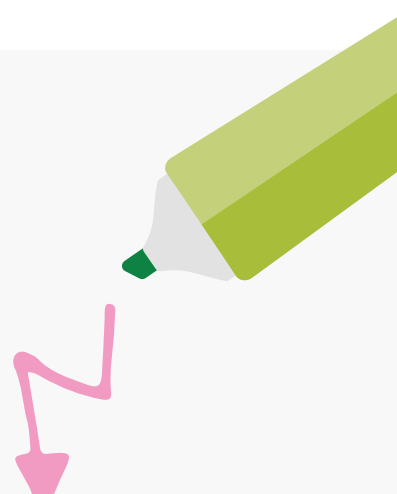
I'm supposed to have extra time for tests, but I don't always. Our last assessment was one in religious studies, and I was supposed to have extra time, but they didn't give me it.

Stitch, 14 to 16 years old



## Ideas for improvements from parents, carers and staff

- ✓ Have open discussions about SEND at school to raise awareness and promote an inclusive culture.
- ✓ Understand and find ways to accommodate young people's needs and preferences.
- ✓ Improve consistency of support across the different local authorities.
- ✓ Improve communication between everyone involved in the support process.
- ✓ Have more regular, specialist staff training on working with young people with SEND.
- ✓ Ensure staff salaries reflect their specialist roles and knowledge.



## More information

Thanks to all the young people, families and staff, as well as everyone else who helped us with this project.

Read the full 'Educational experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities in England' release on the **ONS website**.

If you want this information in another language or format, send an email to: [equalities@ons.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@ons.gov.uk) or call this telephone number: **0800 298 5313**



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National Statistics

