



Update: New publication from the Education Endowment Foundation

Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: Guidance Report

Published 20th March 2020

The publication of this latest guidance report from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) unfortunately coincided with the closure of schools due to the Covid-19 mitigation measures.

The report offers five evidence-based recommendations to support pupils with SEND, 'providing a starting point for schools to review their current approach and practical ideas they can implement'. The aim is to give an overview of some key 'best bets' for improving special educational provision. In many cases, the advice overlaps with other EEF guidance reports such as *Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning* and there is a strong recommendation that schools consider other EEF guidance reports alongside this when planning their SEND provision and response.

This guidance is based on a [focused review of the best available evidence on improving outcomes for pupils with SEND in mainstream schools](#). The review focused on research related to pupils aged 5–16. It was undertaken by the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR) at the University of Warwick. See full citation below.

As with the earlier guidance report *Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants*, alongside the full guidance and evidence reports, a summary of recommendations poster is provided [here](#) and a file of four additional tools and resources can be accessed [here](#).

In summary the guidance makes five key recommendations:

1. Create a positive and supportive environment for all pupils without exception
2. Build an on-going, holistic understanding of your pupils and their needs
3. Ensure all pupils have access to high quality teaching
4. Complement high-quality teaching with carefully selected small group and one-to-one interventions
5. Work effectively with teaching assistants

The very great majority of SENCOs and other leaders will already know these to be necessary. What the guidance report provides however, is additional evidence which may support you in your drive to embed better practice and shift culture and mind-set in your schools. In addition, the guidance makes direct links back to previous reports to reinforce the recommendations.

For example, recommendation one states that *'an inclusive school removes barriers to learning and participation, provides an education that is appropriate to pupils' needs, and promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential for all pupils*. It goes on to describe that schools should:

- Promote positive relationships, active engagement, and well-being for all pupils;
- Ensure all pupils can access the best possible teaching; and
- Adopt a proactive and positive approach to behaviour, as described in the EEF's Improving Behaviour in Schools guidance report (summary of recommendations may be found [here](#)).

First thoughts

Appropriate emphasis is made throughout the report that including all pupils in the best possible teaching and adopting inclusive practice requires distributed responsibility for SEND. This has ramifications not only for the SENCO as leader, but also the wider leadership of the school; the structures in place for the dissemination of information; the modelling of effective strategies in schools; the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of impact, and the resultant action/improvement planning.

The guidance reflects an approach to Special Educational Needs that should be part of every teacher's *'toolbox'*, commenting that *'this does not require a comprehensive understanding of every type of SEND found in classrooms. Effective teachers of pupils with SEND are focused on learning more about the individual profiles of the pupils they teach and maximising the effectiveness of their teaching'*. This supports the view expressed that *'a focus on effective teaching should be the starting point of lesson planning for pupils with SEND, not individual needs or labels – since effective teaching strategies and approaches appear to work universally to support children's learning. Understanding of individual needs may then be used to guide teaching adjustments to enhance learning outcomes for sub-group and individual pupil needs*.

Going forward, it will be interesting to reconcile this deliberate focus on teaching and day to day classroom practice with other drivers, specifically the emphasis on the design of the curriculum as instrumental in achieving the best outcomes for pupils as expressed in the Ofsted inspection framework.

The EEF guidance report is under review by the SEN team and further articles and information will appear on Moodle+ and be incorporated into advice, guidance and training over time. We welcome your thoughts and ideas on how the report and evidence review might be used to shape provision and development in your school. Please contact Sarah Kiel sarah.kiel@hants.gov.uk in the first instance.

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https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Send/EEF_Special_Educational_Needs_in_Mainstream_Schools_Guidance_Report.pdf

Informed by the outcomes of the Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: Evidence Review

Cullen, M.A., Lindsay, G., Hastings, R., Denne, L., Stanford, C., Beqirag, L., Elahi, F., Gemegah, E., Hayden, N., Kander, I., Lykomitrou F., Zander, J. (2020). Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: Evidence Review. London: Education Endowment Foundation.

The report is available from:

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Send/EEF_SEND_Evidence_Review.pdf