



# Data Collection by Type of Special Educational Need

## Overview

The guidance and descriptions aim to provide support to schools and local authorities in recording pupils' needs in the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC).

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Guidance



Pupil Support  
& Access

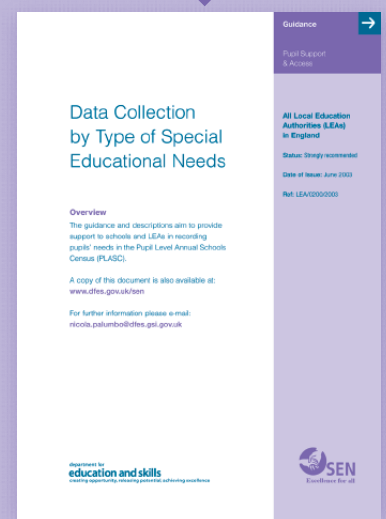
**All Local Authorities  
(LAs) and schools in  
England**

Status: Strongly  
recommended

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This guidance replaces  
Data Collection by Type of  
Special Educational Needs  
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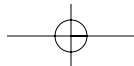
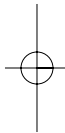
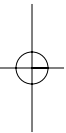


Data Collection  
by Type of Special  
Educational Needs

Overview  
The guidance and descriptions aim to provide support to schools and LEAs in recording pupils' needs in the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC).  
A copy of this document is also available at: [www.dfes.gov.uk/sen](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen)  
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# Collecting information about types of Special Educational Need

## Introduction

It is to be noted that the submission of a Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) return is a statutory requirement under section 537A of the Education Act 1996. This return should be authorised by the head teacher before being sent to the local authority (LA).

Since January 2004 we have collected information about the numbers of pupils in the country with different types of special educational need (SEN) as part of PLASC. The data is used to help with planning, to study trends and to monitor the outcomes of initiatives and interventions for pupils with different types of SEN.

The guidance provided in June and September 2003 has been amended in the light of two years experience of collection and all the queries and comments we have received.

The descriptions set out should help schools and LAs prepare for and record the data accurately.

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## Areas of need

The main areas of difficulty or need are set out in the SEN Code of Practice, Chapter 7. They are Cognition and Learning; Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development; Communication and Interaction; Sensory and/or Physical Needs. To give us more detailed information we have sub-divided some of the broad areas into the categories used by Ofsted. These are:

### A

#### **Cognition and Learning Needs**

- Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)
- Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)
- Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)
- Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)

### B

#### **Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Needs**

- Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulty (BESD)

### C

#### **Communication and Interaction Needs**

- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

### D

#### **Sensory and/or Physical Needs**

- Visual Impairment (VI)
- Hearing Impairment (HI)
- Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)
- Physical Disability (PD)

There is also a category of Other (OTH) which only applies to pupils at *School Action Plus* where there is no clearly identified special educational need.

## Who to record

- **N** - no special educational need  
All pupils without SEN must be recorded as **N** – no special educational need.
- **SEN**  
Pupils at *School Action* should be recorded as having SEN but do not record their type of need.
- **Type of SEN**  
You should only record the type/s of need for pupils where special educational provision is being made at **School Action Plus** or through a **Statement of SEN**.

This means that the pupils receive educational provision which is additional to or different from the educational provision made generally for children of their age and advice has been sought from external services (see **SEN Code of Practice**, Chapters 5 and 6).

## Please remember that:

- Under-attainment may be an indicator of SEN but poor performance may be due to other factors such as problems in the child's home or family circumstances or poor school attendance (see **SEN Code of Practice**, 7.38-7.45 – *for details of where to get copies of this publication, please see the back page*).
- The law says that pupils do not have learning difficulties just because their first language is not English. Of course some of these pupils may have learning difficulties as well.
- A pupil with a medical diagnosis or disability does not have a special educational need, unless special educational provision is needed to access the curriculum.

Therefore **do not** record pupils where English is not their first language or those who have a medical diagnosis or disability unless they also have an identified special educational need. Remember that the special educational need should be recorded as the primary or only need.

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## How to decide

We are aware that many pupils have more than one type of difficulty that are frequently, but not always, inter-related. Therefore you should record information on pupils' greatest or primary need and, where appropriate, their secondary need.

When the pupil has a statement, their needs will have been formally assessed and will be described in Part 2 of the statement. The type or types of need recorded should reflect Part 2. For pupils with statements the category Other (OTH) **must not** be used. If you are unclear as how to record the pupil's needs please contact the LA who makes and maintains the statement for advice.

Some children whose needs are being met at *School Action Plus* will also have had assessments by educational psychologists, specialist teachers and others. This information will help you to decide which SEN to record.

The short descriptions that follow are intended to help you to decide which types of SEN are the most appropriate to record. If they are not sufficient to help you to decide, we would recommend that you talk to your school's educational psychologist or specialist support teacher.

# A Cognition and learning needs

## Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)

→ **Pupils should only be recorded as SpLD if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Specific learning difficulties is an umbrella term which indicates that pupils display differences across their learning. Pupils with SpLD may have a particular difficulty in learning to read, write, spell or manipulate numbers so that their performance in these areas is below their performance in other areas. Pupils may also have problems with short-term memory, with organisational skills and with co-ordination. Pupils with SpLD cover the whole ability range and the severity of their impairment varies widely.

Specific learning difficulties include:

### Dyslexia

Pupils with dyslexia may learn readily in some areas of the curriculum but have a marked and persistent difficulty in acquiring accuracy or fluency in learning to read, write and spell. Pupils may have poor reading comprehension, handwriting and punctuation. They may also have difficulties in concentration and organisation and in remembering sequences of words. They may mispronounce common words or reverse letters and sounds in words.

### Dyscalculia

Pupils with dyscalculia have difficulty in acquiring mathematical skills. Pupils may have difficulty understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers and have problems learning number facts and procedures.

### Dyspraxia

Pupils with dyspraxia are affected by an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement, often appearing clumsy. Gross and fine motor skills are hard to learn and difficult to retain and generalise. Pupils may have poor balance and co-ordination and may be hesitant in many actions (running, skipping, hopping, holding a pencil, doing jigsaws, etc). Their articulation may also be immature and their language late to develop. They may also have poor awareness of body position.

*continued ...* →

# A

## Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)

→ **Pupils should only be recorded as MLD if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Pupils with moderate learning difficulties will have attainments well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. Their needs will not be able to be met by normal differentiation and the flexibilities of the National Curriculum.

Pupils with MLD have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may also have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and under-developed social skills.

## Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)

→ **Pupils should only be recorded as SLD if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Pupils with severe learning difficulties have significant intellectual or cognitive impairments. This has a major effect on their ability to participate in the school curriculum without support. They may also have associated difficulties in mobility and co-ordination, communication and perception and the acquisition of self-help skills. Pupils with SLD will need support in all areas of the curriculum. They may also require teaching of self-help, independence and social skills. Some pupils may use sign and symbols but most will be able to hold simple conversations and gain some literacy skills. Their attainments may be within the upper P scale range (P4-P8) for much of their school careers (that is below level 1 of the National Curriculum).

Further information about P scales can be found in [Supporting the Target Setting Process](#), and [Using the P scales](#).



# A

## Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)

➔ **Pupils should only be recorded as SLD if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have severe and complex learning needs, in addition they have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities or a sensory impairment. Pupils require a high level of adult support, both for their learning needs and also for personal care. They are likely to need sensory stimulation and a curriculum broken down into very small steps. Some pupils communicate by gesture, eye pointing or symbols, others by very simple language. Their attainments are likely to remain in the early P scale range (P1-P4) throughout their school careers (that is below level 1 of the National Curriculum).

Further information about P scales can be found in [Supporting the Target Setting Process](#), and [Using the P scales](#).

# B Behaviour, emotional and social development

## Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulty (BESD)

- **Pupils should only be recorded as BESD if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties cover the full range of ability and a continuum of severity. Their behaviours present a barrier to learning and persist despite the implementation of an effective school behaviour policy and personal/social curriculum. They may be withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing, hyperactive and lack concentration, have immature social skills or present challenging behaviours.

Pupils with a range of difficulties, including emotional disorders such as depression and eating disorders; conduct disorders such as oppositional defiance disorder (ODD); hyperkinetic disorders including attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD); and syndromes such as Tourette's, should be recorded as BESD if additional or different educational arrangements are being made to support them.

- **Where the only additional provision is routine medicine pupils should not be recorded as having SEN.**

# C Communication and interaction needs

## Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

→ **Pupils should only be recorded as SLCN if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Pupils with speech, language and communication needs cover the whole ability range. Pupils with SLCN may have difficulty in understanding and/or making others understand information conveyed through spoken language. Their acquisition of speech and their oral language skills may be significantly behind their peers. Their speech may be poor or unintelligible.

Pupils with language impairments find it hard to understand and/or use words in context. They may use words incorrectly with inappropriate grammatical patterns, have a reduced vocabulary or find it hard to recall words and express ideas. They may also hear or see a word but not be able to understand its meaning or have trouble getting others to understand what they are trying to say.

→ **Please note that pupils whose first language is not English should not be recorded as SLCN unless they also have a special educational need in this area.**

*continued ...* →

# C

## Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

➔ **Pupils should only be recorded as ASD if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder cover the full range of ability and the severity of their impairment varies widely. Some pupils may also have learning disabilities or other difficulties, making identification difficult.

ASD recognises that there are a number of sub-groups within the spectrum of autism. Pupils with ASD find it difficult to:

- understand and use non-verbal and verbal communication
- understand social behaviour - which affects their ability to interact with children and adults
- think and behave flexibly - which may be shown in restricted, obsessional or repetitive activities.

Pupils with Asperger's syndrome should be recorded in this category. These pupils share the same impairments but have higher intellectual abilities although their language development is different from other pupils with autism.

# D

## Sensory and/or physical needs

### Visual Impairment (VI)

- ➔ **Pupils should only be recorded as VI if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Visual impairment refers to a range of difficulties from partial sight through to blindness. Pupils with visual impairments cover the whole ability range. For educational purposes, a pupil is considered to be VI if they require adaptations to their environment or specific differentiation of learning materials in order to access the curriculum.

### Hearing Impairment (HI)

- ➔ **Pupils should only be recorded as HI if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Pupils with a hearing impairment range from those with a mild hearing loss to those who are profoundly deaf. They cover the whole ability range. For educational purposes, pupils are regarded as having a hearing impairment if they require hearing aids, adaptations to their environment and/or particular teaching strategies in order to access the concepts and language of the curriculum.

### Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)

- ➔ **Pupils should only be recorded as MSI if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

Pupils with multi-sensory impairment have a combination of visual and hearing difficulties. They are sometimes referred to as deaf blind but may have some residual sight and/or hearing. Many also have additional disabilities but their complex needs mean that it may be difficult to ascertain their intellectual abilities.

Pupils should only be recorded as MSI if their sensory impairment is their greatest need.

*continued ...* ➔

# D

## Physical Disability (PD)

→ **Pupils should only be recorded as PD if it is the pupil's primary or secondary SEN and they are at *School Action Plus* or have a statement.**

There is a wide range of physical disabilities and pupils cover the whole ability range.

Some pupils are able to access the curriculum and learn effectively without additional educational provision. They have a disability but do not have a special educational need. For others, the impact on their education may be severe. Similarly a medical diagnosis does not necessarily mean that a pupil has SEN. It depends on the impact the condition has on their educational needs. (See SEN Code of Practice chapter 7).

There are a number of medical conditions associated with physical disability which can impact on mobility, such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida and muscular dystrophy. Pupils with physical disabilities may also have associated sensory impairments, neurological problems or learning difficulties.

# Other

## Other (OTH)

This category **must not** be used when the pupil has a statement. If, after looking at Part 2 of the pupil's statement, you are unclear as how to record the pupil's needs please contact the LA who makes and maintains the statement for advice.

This category should **only** be used for pupils at *School Action Plus* where it is not possible to identify the type of special educational need.

With ongoing advice from the school's educational psychologist and other visiting specialist teachers, it is expected that schools should rarely have to use this category.

## References

**SEN Code of Practice** (DfES 0581/2001) can be found at:

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/sen](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sen) or ordered from the Publications Centre

**Supporting the Target Setting Process: Guidance for effective target setting for pupils with special educational needs** (DfEE 0065/2001) can be found at:

[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/63369/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/63369/)

**Using the P scales** (QCA/05/1589), the CD ROM is available from the QCA order line: 08700 606015

## Publications

Copies of Department for Education and Skills publications can be obtained from:

**DfES Publications**

PO Box 5050

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