

Broad areas of need:

Education exists to give children and young people the knowledge and skills they need to grow into capable, healthy and contributing members of society. While most students can access learning through high-quality teaching, some have needs that are greater or more complex than those of their peers and therefore require additional support.

Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (2015), a young person is considered to have a Special Educational Need when they *“have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age”* (DfE & DoH, 2015, p.16). This definition guides schools in identifying students who need provision beyond the universal offer.

The four broad areas of special educational needs set out in the SEND Code of Practice are communication and interaction (C&I), cognition and learning (C&L), social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), and sensory and/or physical needs (S/P) (DfE & DoH, 2015, p.85). These categories help schools understand the general nature of a student’s needs, but many young people present with difficulties that span more than one area. Because each learner is unique, a student’s primary area of need is identified as the category that best reflects their current, most significant challenges.

Communication and interaction (C&I) needs cover speech, language and communication difficulties. These may involve challenges with producing speech, expressing ideas, or understanding spoken language. Because language underpins learning and social interaction, students with C&I needs may also struggle with the social use of language and may experience additional learning difficulties alongside their communication challenges.

Cognition and learning (C&L) refers to difficulties with understanding, retaining, or applying new learning. These needs may be identified as specific learning difficulties (SpLD), moderate learning difficulties (MLD), or, in the most complex cases, profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).

Sensory and/or physical (S/P) needs include physical disabilities and sensory impairments, such as hearing impairment (HI) and visual impairment (VI). Students with these needs often require input from a range of specialist professionals to ensure their provision is well planned. While some may experience associated learning difficulties due to the additional challenges they face, others may have average or above-average cognitive ability.

Social, emotional, and mental health difficulties (SEMH) – This an increasingly complex category is for students who have needs relating to their mental health, their social interactions and/or emotional regulation. We believe that all behaviours are communications. For some young people with SEMH difficulties, the nature of these difficulties could impact their learning and

as such can present with additional learning difficulties.