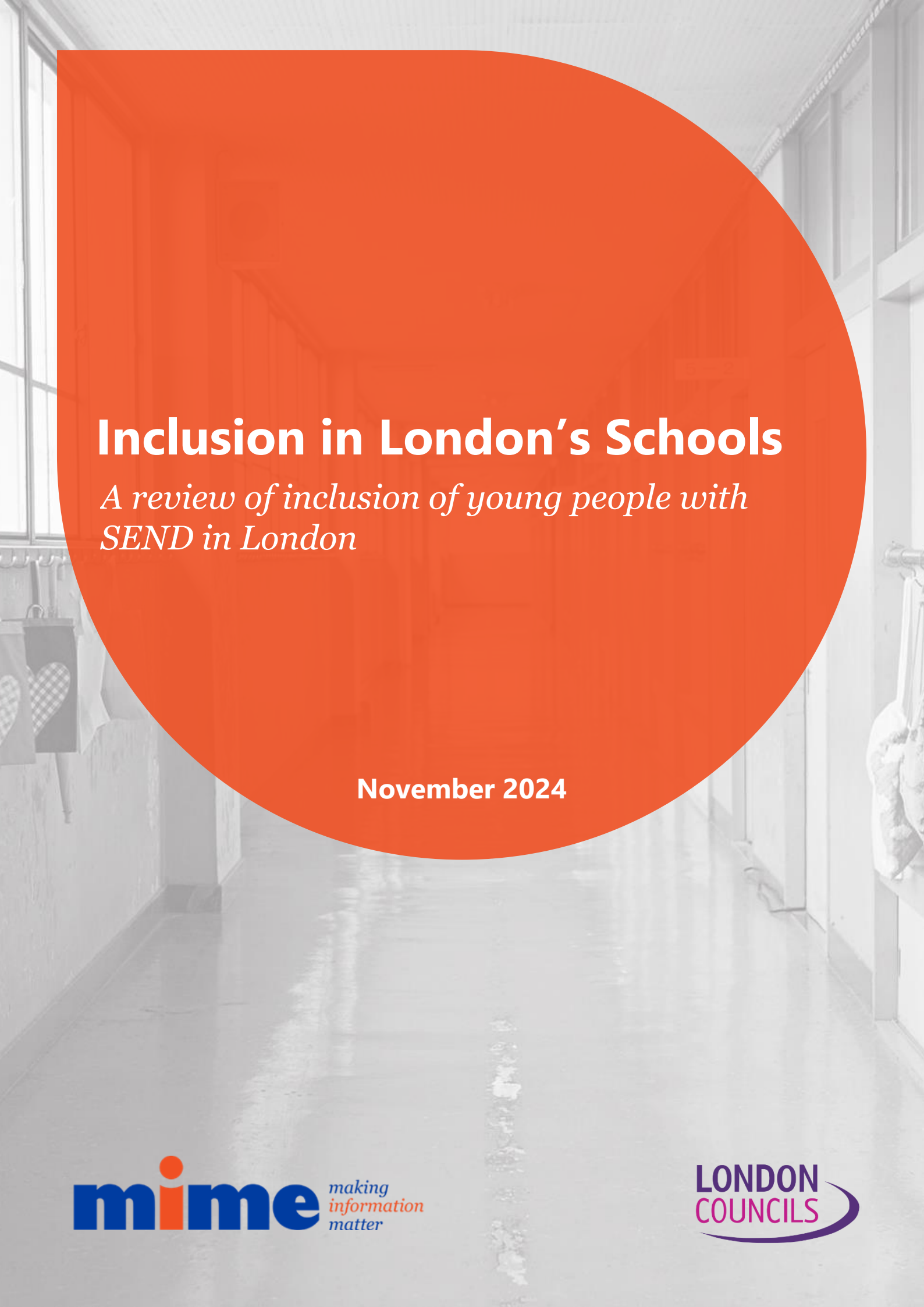

# Inclusion in London's Schools

*A review of inclusion of young people with SEND in London*

**November 2024**

mime making information matter

LONDON COUNCILS

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**This report was commissioned by London Councils and written by Mime** (Joe Miller, Rory Nethercott, Will Mehew, Steve Preston, Phil Rossiter, Laura Jones and associate Diana Choulerton)



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The analysis was carried out in the Secure Research Service, part of the Office for National Statistics.

# Inclusion in London's Schools

A summary of our research into the inclusion of young people with SEND in London

## What is inclusion?

Having collated the views of young people with SEND, their parents and carers, teachers, local authority stakeholders and other SEND professionals, **we define inclusion as:**

***Identifying and supporting the full range of needs through flexible provision, including a broad universal offer, with an emphasis on welcoming all young people and creating a feeling of belonging across the school community.***

## And why is it important?

- Emotional benefits for young people with SEND
- Stronger engagement in learning
- Avoiding financial and emotional stress for families
- Better outcomes for young people with SEND
- Social benefits for all young people

"Inclusion is being part of a place that feels like home"

Key Stage 4 pupil with SEND
**Mainstream Secondary School**

**This definition encompasses four principles, all enabled by appropriate and sufficient local provision:**

- An excellent universal offer
- Flexibility to meet individual needs
- A supportive culture and ethos
- Early and accurate identification

"To ensure good inclusion there needs to be flexibility to meet individual needs along with an excellent and broad universal offer. This will recognise different cultures and promote early and accurate identification."

Rosalind Luff
**National Network of Parent Carer Forums London Region**

# London's Challenges

# Recommendations

**59%**

of parents/carers reported concerns over an **inflexible approach** from schools.

**13%**

**reduction in TA workforce** in London since 2016
**vs. 2% growth across England**

## A well-supported workforce with specialist skills

Ensure a focus on inclusion in teacher training

Establish sufficient workforce of specialists to draw upon

Further professionalise the TA role

Even in schools rated Outstanding by Ofsted, pupils with SEND in London are **more likely than their peers to be**:

- × **Suspended**
- × **Persistently absent**
- × **Off-rolled**

## An accountability framework that encourages inclusion

Ensure the Ofsted framework and report card prioritises inclusion

Adapt school performance measures to reward inclusive practice

Since 2016 the EHCP cohort size has **doubled**

**3,500**

London pupils **wait longer** than the statutory timeframe for an EHCP each year

**57%**

of parents/carers of young people with SEND reported **financial challenges**

## Sufficient and responsive funding

Allocate sufficient funding to meet growing need

Use funding flexibly to address needs earlier

**17%**

of special school placements are **not in a child's home borough**

*"The key is to build trust with families, and to be transparent and flexible"*

**Local authority stakeholder**

## Strengthened partnership working across London

Improve information sharing to facilitate pan-London planning and commissioning

Ensure the views of young people and their families feed into strategic decisions

# Executive summary

## Background to this report

Across London, the cohort of school pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) grew by 21% in the five years from January 2019 to January 2024, up to more than 250,000 pupils. The number of pupils requiring Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has grown even more quickly, up by more than 50% in the same time period and now accounting for around one in every 20 London school pupils.

As this cohort has grown, the number of young people with SEND in school placements outside state-funded mainstream schools has also grown sharply. The use of independent school provision for young people with an EHCP is up 31% in London in the last five years, and even more across England. This growth risks isolating young people with SEND from their peers and local communities, and has stretched local authority budgets and school resources. That, in turn, has driven longer waiting lists across the system, including for assessment and support. While stakeholders across London are keen to ensure sufficient inclusive provision to support the growing number of young people with SEND, there is widespread concern about how consistent inclusive practice is across the capital, and cross-party political consensus on the need for action[1].

**London Councils commissioned Mime to carry out research into inclusion of young people with SEND in London's schools. The aims were to work towards a definition of inclusion, highlight the benefits of inclusion, better understand the picture of inclusion across London, and make recommendations for stakeholders across the system to improve inclusion in the capital.**

We took a mixed-methods approach to this research, collecting both qualitative and quantitative evidence. As well as school, local authority and government stakeholders, it was essential to ensure **the voices of young people with SEND and their families** were amplified in our research, so we ran several focus groups and surveys with parents and carers, as well as carrying out school visits. Additionally, we explored **data from the National Pupil Database** (NPD). This allowed us to better understand the specific patterns and drivers of non-inclusive practice across London and helped to build on the qualitative evidence and inform impactful recommendations.

## What is inclusion?

Our research revealed a widespread desire for schools to be inclusive, but inconsistencies in definitions of inclusion. However, while definitions varied, **four key *principles* of inclusion** were consistently identified, each enabled by appropriate and sufficient local provision:

1. **An excellent universal offer**, with high quality teaching that meets the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. Embedding this offer as a *universal* expectation, rather than an "add-on" for young people with SEND, means they can feel included and remain as present as possible in all aspects of school life, while enabling them to learn in the manner that is right for them

[1] The Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat 2024 election manifestos all pledged better support for young people with SEND

2. **Flexibility to meet individual needs**, including in approaches to timetabling, curriculum, school polices and the physical learning environment
3. **A culture and ethos** that values social, as well as educational, inclusion where schools work in partnership with families to understand needs and ensure young people with SEND feel welcomed
4. **Early and accurate identification** of needs without long delays. This should facilitate a "cradle-to-career" approach that addresses needs early and recognises the importance of long-term outcomes, including after a young person leaves the education system

We took these four principles to produce the following definition of inclusion:

**Identifying and supporting the full range of needs through flexible provision, including a broad universal offer, with an emphasis on welcoming all young people and creating a feeling of belonging across the school community**

## The benefits of inclusion

Our research has identified five benefits of inclusion for a range of stakeholders:

1. **Emotional benefits** for both young people with SEND and their families. Almost all (99%) of the parents and carers of young people with SEND in London surveyed in our research stated that they had experienced non-inclusive practice that had caused emotional distress
2. **Stronger engagement in learning** for young people with SEND, including evidence that inclusion can be an effective way to boost attendance and tackle Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)
3. **Avoiding financial stress** and career sacrifices for families with young people with SEND. More than half of the parents and carers we surveyed had faced financial challenges from non-inclusive practice and, for four in ten, this included losing their job
4. Improved **outcomes** for young people with SEND, including outcomes in school as well as longer term employment and health outcomes
5. **Social benefits** for all young people, including those with no SEND. This includes evidence of inclusion resulting in increased tolerance of difference and lower levels of prejudice

## Key challenges in London

London faces several challenges which may present barriers to the inclusion of children and young people with SEND:

- There is **insufficient funding for many local authorities to fulfil their statutory duties in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND**, resulting in many being brought into government programmes such as Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value
    - Stakeholders across London were clear that they would be able to be more inclusive if they had more funding, and just 1% of senior leaders believe they have enough funding to meet the needs of their pupils with SEND. Stakeholders are being asked to deliver more provision while being funding constrained, meaning that, **as pressure on the services has grown, funding available for inclusion has become increasingly limited.**

- **London's SEND cohort is growing at a rapid rate**, now representing over 17% of pupils, and seven boroughs now seeing over a fifth of school pupils identified with SEND
    - As the **cohort of young people in London identified with SEND has grown**, the number of young people with SEND educated outside mainstream schools has increased rapidly, putting pressure on resources across the system and presenting a risk that pupils with SEND do not feel included in London's schools
- The workforce capacity has not kept pace with the growth in the size of the SEND cohort. In fact, there has been almost no growth in the number of local authority employed educational psychologists in London, and the **number of teaching assistants employed within London schools has been falling in recent years**
    - London schools have instead had to **rely heavily on third-party agency teaching assistants** to cope with the increasing support requirements. The use of these agency teaching assistants has grown 245% in London in the last 10 years
- **Concern about a lack of inclusion is now widespread** across the education sector, from young people and their families, to the DfE, school leaders, and Ofsted

## How inclusive are London's schools?

- The data shows a **mixed picture across London** with almost as many parents and carers of young people with SEND able to describe an example of particularly effective inclusion as could describe non-inclusive practice they have experienced
- Similarly, across many of the schools and local authorities involved in our research, we found clear examples of effective inclusion, as well as a widespread commitment to inclusion across school leaders and local authority decision makers. However, stakeholders were clear that this was **not consistent across all schools in London.** School leaders were also clear that growing SEND cohorts, **financial pressures**, and some **accountability measures** have made inclusion more difficult in practice
- While pupils with SEND in London tend to have stronger attainment, attendance and exclusions outcomes compared to the England averages for pupils with SEND, **there is a large and often growing gap in outcomes compared to their peers with no SEND.**
- **Suspensions**, **persistent absenteeism** and the rates of **leaving school at a non-standard point** are higher for pupils with SEND across London than their peers with no identified SEND. These SEND gaps are present **across all types of schools**. Even in schools graded *outstanding* by Ofsted, the proportion of pupils with SEND that were suspended was more than double that for their peers
    - Even when **controlling for specific school and pupil characteristics**, the odds of a pupil with SEND in a London school being suspended were around 2.5 times higher than a pupil without SEND. Similarly, their odds of being persistently absent were around 1.8 times higher than an equivalent pupil without SEND
- In London, **Black pupils with SEND were found to be more at risk of suspensions than both other pupils with SEND who are not Black, and Black pupils with no identified SEND**. In fact, Black secondary school pupils with SEND were 1.5 times as likely to be suspended than other pupils with SEND, when controlling for other characteristics. Concerningly, this inequality appears more pronounced in London than across the rest of England
- There is also evidence that **inclusive practice is most difficult to implement in schools with high rates of deprivation.** In 2021/22, more than 15% of secondary school pupils

with SEND were excluded in London's most deprived schools, compared with less than 10% in the least deprived schools

## Recommendations

In order to ensure that London's young people, their families and stakeholders across the system can realise the benefits of inclusion, we have made recommendations for changes to the way stakeholders across London collaborate, to how local authorities and schools are funded, to workforce skills, and to accountability systems:

### 1. Train and support a workforce with the sufficient skillset and resources to meet need

- The **DfE** should work to bring about a further **professionalisation of the teaching assistant role**, particularly in relation to the support they provide for pupils with SEND, with clear pathways for progression and appropriate remuneration
- **Initial Teacher Training** (ITT) **providers**, **and providers of continued professional development** should also ensure that there is an **overt focus on inclusion** in the training curriculum
- **ITT providers** should ensure that trainee teachers are able to, and encouraged to, take **placements in inclusive schools**, including special schools
- The **DfE** should explore the establishment of an enhanced SEND or **SEND specialist career path** to ensure schools have access to teachers with the skills needed to meet the full range of pupil needs
- London **schools**, **MATs**, and **local authorities** should do more to enable a greater degree of **movement of qualified teachers between mainstream and special schools**
- The **government** should ensure that there is a **sufficient workforce of associated experts available** to schools, MATs and local authorities, including educational psychologists and speech and language therapists. This should be informed by robust forecasting of future needs
- **MAT** and **school leaders** should ensure that the **SENDCO, alongside other senior leaders,** take responsibility for the school's approach to inclusion
- **SENDCOs** and other **school leaders** should ensure that all teachers are aware of the **latest evidence on inclusive and non-inclusive practice**

### 2. Ensure accountability systems and performance measures are incentivising and rewarding schools, MATs, and local authorities for being inclusive

- **Ofsted** should ensure that the new inspection criterion on **inclusion is valued on an equal footing with safeguarding and academic performance**. The approach to understanding inclusion should be in line with the definition of inclusion in this report
- **Ofsted** should ensure that the new **report cards include data on inclusion,** such as suspension and persistent absentee rates of pupils with SEND, as well as off-rolling
- **Ofsted** should ensure that the **views of young people with SEND and their families are prioritised in their upcoming consultations** and work with the National Children's Bureau, so that the changes made address their most important concerns
- The **DfE** must review the role of school and college **performance measures in narrowing the curriculum**

- The **DfE** must **evaluate the impact of pressure on absence** rates on young people with SEND
- **Schools and MATs** should be supported to adopt more **flexible approaches to absence policies** to support pupils with SEND who find attending school challenging
- The **DfE** should **publish measures of long-term outcomes** for pupils with SEND by school, college, and local authority

**3. Establish a funding arrangement that is sufficient and allows the flexibility to respond to needs**

- The **DfE** must ensure that local authorities, MATs and schools, have **sustainable and sufficient funding to support effective inclusion** of the rapidly growing cohort of young people with SEND
- **Local authorities** and the **DfE** must ensure that **funding is responsive to the needs** that arise, including facilitating early intervention to meet needs before they escalate

**4. Strengthen partnership working across London, including families and young people with SEND**, to ensure a joined-up, informed, and inclusive approach across London, as well as to support the sharing of best practice

- **London's local authorities, MATs and schools** should **strengthen and expand the involvement of young people with SEND and their parents and carers in strategic decision making**, as well as decisions about their individual cases. The perspectives of those from groups at most risk of non-inclusive practice, including disadvantaged and Black pupils, should be actively sought
- **The DfE** should **empower London's local authorities to make decisions around investment in future educational provision**. These should be made collaboratively and informed by a clear shared understanding of inclusion
- London's **local authority** education and social care teams, alongside relevant **NHS** bodies, should expand and strengthen collaboration on **joint commissioning** of a range of services for young people with SEND. This should be informed by pan-London intelligence on likely future needs
- **London's local authorities** should **establish more effective mechanisms for sharing data on early years children**, including between nurseries and health care providers, to facilitate better early and accurate identification of education, health and care needs
- **London's local authorities and schools** should establish **clear mechanisms to encourage the sharing of good practice**, including making use of existing sub-regional groups and school clusters

# Foreword from London Councils

**The number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in London, and indeed the whole country, has grown dramatically in recent years**. From January 2023 to January 2024 London saw an increase in the number of children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) of over 9%. This significant rise in demand is creating considerable challenges for the services aimed at supporting children with SEND.

Despite concerted efforts from schools, mainstream education is struggling to provide a good quality inclusive education for many children with SEND. Providing a more inclusive education would help support many more children to achieve their full potential including, long-term outcomes such as accessing sustainable employment opportunities. However, we recognise that many schools are unable to deliver this due to insufficient funding and other pressures. **This perfect storm of increasing pressure for schools coupled with constraints on local authority finances have left schools struggling to be able to create a supportive environment for all pupils.**

We commissioned Mime to unearth the scale of non-inclusive practice, such as off-rolling, in London's schools, to identify areas of good practice in inclusive education and unpack why so many schools struggle with being able to deliver this. Mime has consulted a wide range of stakeholders to be able to present a system-wide picture of inclusion. These included interviews and surveys with young people with SEND, parents and carers, school leaders, and local authority decision makers.

The report sets out a common understanding of inclusion based on this system-wide research and proposes recommendations for a whole-system approach to providing more inclusion in mainstream education.

With better pan-London working, we can stop the variation in practice for families when it comes to securing a place for their child in a school that is able to meet their child's needs. A strategic vision for inclusion with adequate funding, targeted training for teachers, robust accountability measures, and a flexible approach for children with SEND, from early identification all the way through to supporting their transition to adulthood, will help to ensure this.

**This research has demonstrated that families, schools and local authorities are all willing partners in this mission. We can create change in London and give our children the best possible start in life by working together, alongside the national government and other education partners.**

***Councillor Ian Edwards – Executive member for children and young people***

# Foreword from the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, London Region

**I would like to thank Mime and London Councils for extending the opportunity to include parent carer voices into their report on inclusion.**

As one of the London representatives for the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, I helped to reach out across London forums to bring parent's lived experiences of inclusion. We did this by facilitating some focus group events. Mime also offered other opportunities for parents to contribute.

I welcome this opportunity to help inform on the current picture of inclusion in London. I'm passionate that inclusion needs to be embedded into all that the sector does, not just a bolt on.

Often, it is the ethos that needs to be changed, rather than any particular expensive services. I believe that schools, LA's and wider partners can benefit by recognising parents as part of the team and exploring with us to find solutions or approaches that would work for our young people.

All too often the system sets partners onto an adversarial route and it needn't be that way. We want to find solutions to securing timely and appropriate support without needing to pursue a litigious route. I'm sure the other partners in the SEND system would want that too.

It can feel that parts of the system look first at what the child needs to do to change in order to 'fit in' or comply. My thoughts are that it ought to be the adults, including parents, that need to reflect upon their own part in supporting the child. We need to work as a team to explore on how we might change or adapt in order to better support the child or young person. We need to take the struggle out of SEND and work as a team to look for solutions.

**I've witnessed when inclusion has been woven into a service. This includes mutual respect, an approach of 'what can we do', rather than 'who can we blame'. Each child is unique and offers an opportunity for the adults supporting them to learn too. The classroom also provides an ideal opportunity to help nurture inclusion for tomorrow's society.**

This research is important for parent and carers to help highlight where the struggles are and hopefully shine a light on positive inclusive practice across London. The benefits of getting this right are so important. Good inclusion can promote social, wellbeing and academic outcomes. It can aid engagement in learning/school, and even reduce financial stress on families. Where inclusion is poor, the negative ripples can affect the whole family.

**To ensure good inclusion there needs to be flexibility to meet individual needs along with an excellent and broad universal offer. This will recognise different cultures and promote early and accurate identification.**

The tensions in the SEND system are well documented. There are no quick fixes or one size solutions however, we can make a difference if we work as a team, reflect, be respectful, curious and kind. It's time to embrace the ethos and cultural change that the Children & Families Act 2014 sought to bring.

***Rosalind Luff – National Network of Parent Carer Forums, London Region***

# A. Background to this report

## Project rationale

In November 2023, London Councils commissioned Mime to carry out research into the inclusion of young people with SEND in London's schools. The research aims were to:

1. **Improve understanding** of inclusion in London's schools, including the specific drivers and groups that are affected the most, and the benefits of inclusive practice
2. **Measure** the scale of non-inclusive practice such as exclusions and off-rolling
3. **Identify** successful ways to address non-inclusive practice and promote inclusion
4. **Influence** practice, policy and legislation to ensure that local authorities can fulfil a role that makes all state-funded schools more inclusive

To achieve these aims, London Councils identified that both qualitative and quantitative evidence should be collected and analysed. Mime therefore proposed a mixed-methods approach, including desk-based research, quantitative data analysis, interviews, surveys, focus groups, and statistical analysis. Further details on the research methods can be found in Section B of the report.

**This report therefore explores inclusion of young people with SEND across London.** It first sets out the national and local context, then explores what is meant by inclusion, before exploring the quantitative and qualitative data from across London. Finally, we make a series of recommendations to be taken forward by stakeholders across London and beyond. Throughout, we draw on a wide range of evidence, from interviews and focus groups with young people with SEND, to analysis of data from the National Pupil Database (NPD).

## The need for an inclusive approach

Across England, **the cohort of school pupils with SEND grew** by 27% in the five years from January 2019 to January 2024, up to 1.7 million pupils. The SEND cohort now represents more than 18% of all pupils in England schools[2]. This national growth was reflected in London, with the cohort up 21% to 260,000 pupils in January 2024. The increase in the number of pupils in London issued with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), which is a legally binding document issued to address the needs of young people with the most complex SEND[3], has been even more stark, growing by 57% in the same time period to over 90,000. Whether these increases have been driven by better or broader identification of needs, or by an increase in SEND among the population, with almost a fifth of all pupils identified with SEND, working out how to effectively include young people with SEND in the school system has never been more important.

**As the cohort has grown, the number of young people with SEND educated outside mainstream schools has also grown rapidly** across England**.** As of January 2024, 157,000 pupils with SEND are educated in special schools across England, 137,000 are in independent or non-maintained provision, and a further 13,000 are placed in state-funded alternative provision

[2] DfE (January 2024) Special educational needs in England (School Census)
[3] Council for Disabled Children, What is an Education Health and Care Plan?

schools. In addition, around 22,000 young people with EHCPs are placed in resourced provision or SEN units within mainstream schools. There are strong arguments that the use of non-mainstream provision is required for some pupils. However, these large and growing numbers highlight the need to focus on inclusion as a means of ensuring we do not move to a norm which entrenches a lack of support to meet SEND needs in mainstream education. In many cases, mainstream schools may not feel able to make appropriate adjustments, may be unable to or delayed in addressing the learning needs of pupils with SEND, may take an inflexible approach, or may exclude pupils with SEND from school altogether.

**Inclusion is important and has many benefits.** As outlined in Section D, young people with SEND who feel included tend to see better social, wellbeing and academic outcomes, as well as stronger engagement at school, and better preparation for moving into adulthood in their local community. There is also evidence that their families will experience less emotional and financial distress. For local authorities, ensuring increasing and consistent inclusive practice could better meet the needs of pupils with SEND in local mainstream schools, which in turn may deliver better value for money in the long term, through reinvestment into ensuring all schools are inclusive and welcoming to young people with SEND.

Various surveys of education stakeholders have reaffirmed the importance of inclusion to those in the sector and shown that **concern about a lack of effective inclusion is widespread**. An NFER survey ahead of the 2024 general election revealed that 47% of teachers thought that "ensuring there is sufficient support and resources for pupils with SEND" was one of the most important issues in education[4]. This ranked well ahead of issues like behaviour, the curriculum, and school buildings. More recent research by Isos Partnership on behalf of the Local Government Association and the County Council Network found similar[5]. They surveyed stakeholders across the education sector and found that work to "create a more inclusive system" was the second most popular priority for SEND, only just behind funding.

## National context

**Local authorities have a statutory duty** to improve educational standards for *all* pupils, and to administer the assessment and placement of children with an EHCP[6]. Building on these statutory duties, in March 2023, under the previous government, the Department for Education (DfE) published their SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan[7,8]. This plan outlined several areas of focus, including implementing 'national standards', ensuring successful transitions through education phases and into adulthood, workforce development, accountability systems, and improving the financial sustainability of the SEND system. Within this plan, the previous government reiterated their desire to improve inclusion, for example by improving provision for pupils with SEND in mainstream schools, developing local inclusion plans and producing inclusion dashboards.

[4] NFER (March 2024), Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey
[5] Isos Partnership, LGA, CCN (July 2024) Towards an effective and financially sustainable approach to SEND in England
[6] Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014
[7] DfE (2023), SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan
[8] Further discussion of the improvement plan can be found on the Mime website

**The DfE's 2023/24 annual accounts also make clear that they believe there are risks from the growing need for support for children and young people with SEND**, stating that "*high needs pressures continue to outstrip available funding significantly*"[9]. Furthermore, they state that this pressure on high needs budgets has worsened in the year and is now a critical risk.

> *"A risk that despite substantial real terms increases in high needs funding,* ***high needs pressures continue to outstrip available funding significantly****, making the SEND and AP system financially unsustainable. Increased funding for high needs has been driven in part by rising demand for education health and care plans (EHC plans)."*
>
> DfE Consolidated Annual Report and Accounts (March 2024)

**The current focus on SEND and inclusion is cross-party**, and the 2024 Labour Party manifesto included explicit mention of SEND, as well as a commitment to boosting "inclusivity" in mainstream schools[10]. Additionally, the manifesto committed the new government to reviewing accountability frameworks, including "replacing a single headline grade [from Ofsted] with a new report card system".

> *"Too often our education and care systems do not meet the needs of all children, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).* ***Labour will take a community-wide approach, improving inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, as well as ensuring special schools cater to those with the most complex needs.*** *We will make sure admissions decisions account for the needs of communities and require all schools to co-operate with their local authority on school admissions, SEND inclusion, and place planning."*
>
> The Labour Party Manifesto (June 2024)

**Ofsted have also acknowledged a growing issue with respect to the inclusion of young people with SEND.** The Ofsted Annual Report for 2022/23 outlined the impact of the "growing pressures" on SEND services, for local authorities, schools and health and therapy services[11]. Ofsted also highlighted the growing pressure on mainstream schools, as well as the risk that inadequate resourcing in certain areas of the system is resulting in the needs of young people with SEND not being met. Despite this, the report does not specifically use the words "inclusion" or "inclusivity".

[9] DfE (March 2024), Consolidated annual report and accounts
[10] The Labour Party Manifesto (June 2024)
[11] Ofsted (November 2023), The Annual Report of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2022/23

*"Many **children, young people and families are experiencing delays** in access to services…Local authorities are struggling to meet demand for assessments and follow-on services.*

*Given growing pressures on special school capacity, the complexity **and range of needs that mainstream schools are having to cater for is continuing to increase**. The shortage of special school places also means that alternative provision (AP) is sometimes used as a shadow SEND system. Pupils are being referred to AP while they wait for a suitable placement at a specialist school. As a result, some pupils are spending long periods of time in provision that **is not resourced to meet their needs."***

Ofsted Annual Report 2022/23 (November 2023)

While the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook refers to *good* schools ensuring that "pupils with SEND achieve the best possible outcomes", there is no clarity about which outcomes are being referred to, or any explicit reference to inclusion. Similarly, it refers to schools promoting "equality of opportunity and diversity effectively" but is unclear how this relates to young people with SEND. Finally, the focus on SEND is primarily concerned with adaptive teaching, or educational inclusion, rather than considering inclusion in school life and social inclusion in a more general sense[12].

More recently, Ofsted has made several steps that could support a greater focus on inclusion. This was accompanied by new government policy, including the commitment to replace single grade inspection outcomes and introduce a "report card", which was in Labour's election manifesto. In 2024, Ofsted reviewed their approach to inspections and moved to displaying sub-judgements more clearly alongside the overall grade[13]. In September 2024, Ofsted published the results of their *Big Listen,* which included a commitment to introducing a new inspection criterion for inclusion and outlined that report cards will include a focus on meeting the needs of young people with SEND[14]. Ofsted intends to consult on these changes in early 2025 and is already working with the National Children's Bureau to review evidence on inclusion[15]. This means that there is now a clear opportunity to rebalance inspections towards inclusion, allowing schools to be rewarded for inclusive practice, and supporting families of young people with SEND to choose more inclusive schools.

Separately, there are concerns around the inadequate or insufficient quality assurance of some unregulated alternative provision, much of which is likely to be disproportionately attended by young people with SEND[16]. The previous government had already signalled an intention to address this through a "quality assurance framework" and new national standards. However, the details of this are not yet clear. While some quality assurance of alternative provision is carried out by local authorities, it is patchy and there is a risk of duplication, particularly in areas, like London, where many students travel between local authorities to attend their provision.

**The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the education sector**, and many of the specific impacts of the pandemic are not yet fully understood. This is being further explored

[12] Ofsted (April 2024), School inspection handbook
[13] Ofsted (May 2024), Ofsted displays school sub-judgements on reports website
[14] Ofsted (September 2024), Hearing feedback, accepting criticism and building a better Ofsted: the response to the Big Listen
[15] Schools Week (October 2024), Revealed: How Ofsted will develop plans to inspect inclusion
[16] Public data shows that the large majority of pupils in state-funded alternative provision have SEND

in module 8 of the UK Covid-19 public inquiry, which includes consideration of the education and health impact of the pandemic on children with SEND[17]. Many London stakeholders interviewed in our research were clear that the pandemic has had a specific impact on SEND, with higher levels of need in certain areas and certain age groups.

**A final important factor in the national context is the move to academisation**. Across England, including in London, a large number of primary schools and a majority of secondary schools are academies, either in Single or Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). This means that they are not maintained directly by the local authority in which they are located. While there are clear statutory duties around SEND for local authorities in relation to all schools in their area, academisation has changed how closely local authorities work with some schools and has limited their oversight. Some MATs have their own SEND or inclusion policies and strategies, which are not necessarily aligned with local authority objectives. Importantly, the Labour party have also committed to bringing MATs into the inspection system, including annual reviews of safeguarding, attendance and off-rolling.

> *"We will enhance the inspection regime by **replacing a single headline grade with a new report card system** telling parents clearly how schools are performing. We will also bring Multi-Academy Trusts into the inspection system and introduce a new annual review of safeguarding, attendance, and off-rolling."*
>
> The Labour Party Manifesto (June 2024)

While it remains to be seen what, how and when these commitments will be taken forward and implemented by the new government and Ofsted, this presents a clear opportunity for inclusion to play a much bigger role in the education system, supported by new guidance, frameworks and legislation.

Having set out the national context, the remaining sections of this report focus specifically on the research carried out in London. This includes outlining the key challenges in London, many of which echo the national concerns above, exploring how inclusive London's schools are, and making recommendations for improving inclusion across the capital.

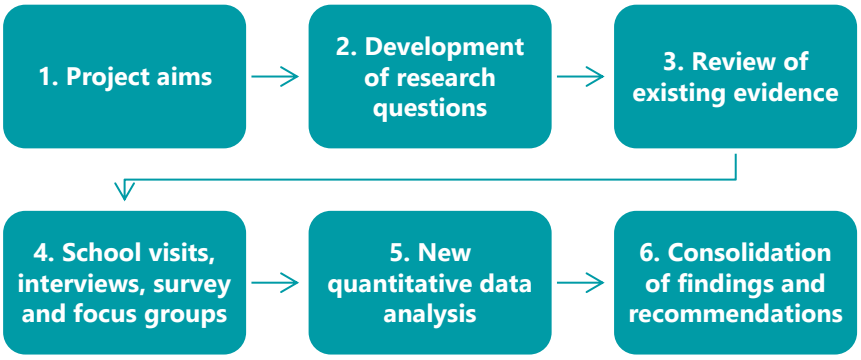
[17] UK Covid-19 Inquiry (May 2024), Module 8 Provisional Outline of Scope

# B. Summary of our research method

This section presents a high-level summary of our research method. A more detailed description of each stage is outlined in Appendix 2.

We took a mixed-methods approach to this research, triangulating our findings from a range of perspectives and types of data. We first reviewed existing evidence and then conducted new quantitative and qualitative analysis, including consulting with a wide range of stakeholders, ensuring the voices of young people with SEND and their families were present in this research.

**Figure 1: Summary of our research method**




## 1. Research aims

The aims of this research are distinct from previous research on SEND in England in two key ways. Firstly, this research focuses specifically on **inclusion** meaning, while the report touches on other issues within the SEND system, the analysis and recommendations are primarily aimed at understanding and improving inclusion. Secondly, the research is aimed at addressing inclusion **in London**. While many of the issues discussed, and some of the recommendations made, will be relevant across England, everything is set in the London context. This allows for more directly useful analysis, and more targeted recommendations. In addition, many of the stakeholders involved in this research are in a position to directly address several of our recommendations.

This project set out with the following research aims:

1. **Improve understanding** of inclusion in London's schools, including the specific drivers and groups that are affected the most, and the benefits of inclusive practice
2. **Measure** the scale of non-inclusive practice, such as exclusions and off-rolling
3. **Identify** successful ways to address non-inclusive practice and promote inclusion
4. **Influence** practice, policy and legislation to ensure that local authorities can fulfil a role that supports all state-funded schools to be more inclusive

## 2. Research questions

Building on London Councils' initial research aims, research questions were agreed and refined during the first stage of this research project. These questions cover four areas:

A. **What is inclusion?**
B. **What are the benefits of inclusive practice?**
C. **How widespread is non-inclusive practice and who is most impacted?**
D. **How can inclusion in London's schools be improved?**

## 3. Evidence review

The research team initially reviewed 38 pieces of existing literature, including several meta-studies. The literature reviewed was from a range of sources, including academic journals, local authority and national government documents, schools, MATs, Ofsted, charities and NGOs. In addition, we reviewed dozens of recent news articles around SEND and inclusion.

This existing evidence helped to further direct our own qualitative and quantitative data collection, as well as begin to answer some of the research questions.

## 4. Qualitative data collection

It was important for this research itself to follow an inclusive approach, ensuring a wide range of voices were heard. Key to this, the qualitative data collection included young people with SEND, who have the most important stake in improving inclusion. This qualitative data came from:

- **School visits** – We visited seven mainstream secondary schools and one special school, and held a further virtual 'visit' with one local autism outreach service. These involved engaging with:
    - **Children and young people with SEND** – Focus groups with young people in Key Stage 3 (KS3), Key Stage 4 (KS4) and post-16 where the schools had sixth forms. These aimed to understand their views, experiences and gather examples of inclusive and non-inclusive practices
    - **SENDCOs and other school leaders** – Interviews to understand the strategic approach to inclusion and identify key barriers
    - **Other teachers and wider school staff** – Interviews with wider school staff, including early career teachers[18] and support staff, to understand how well implemented the overall approach to inclusion was across the school
- **Parents and carers of children and young people with SEND** – Working with the London regional group from the National Network of Parent Carer Forums to hold four online focus groups and an online survey, gaining the perspective of over 200 parents and carers
- **Local authority stakeholders** – A cross-section of local authority stakeholders in London
- **Online interviews with other stakeholders** – Online semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from the DfE, Ofsted, a teaching union, and charities

## 5. Quantitative data collection

Qualitative findings were supported, cross-checked and challenged by analysis of quantitative data. This allowed us to understand how widespread the experiences shared were, identify trends, and support key findings with representative data. Two categories of data were analysed:

- **Public data sources** – Analysis of a wide range of publicly available data sources
- **National pupil database (NPD)** – We also secured access to the National Pupil Database (NPD). This allowed us to link school census, absence and suspension data to better understand suspensions, persistent absenteeism and the rates of pupils with SEND leaving their school at non-standard times.

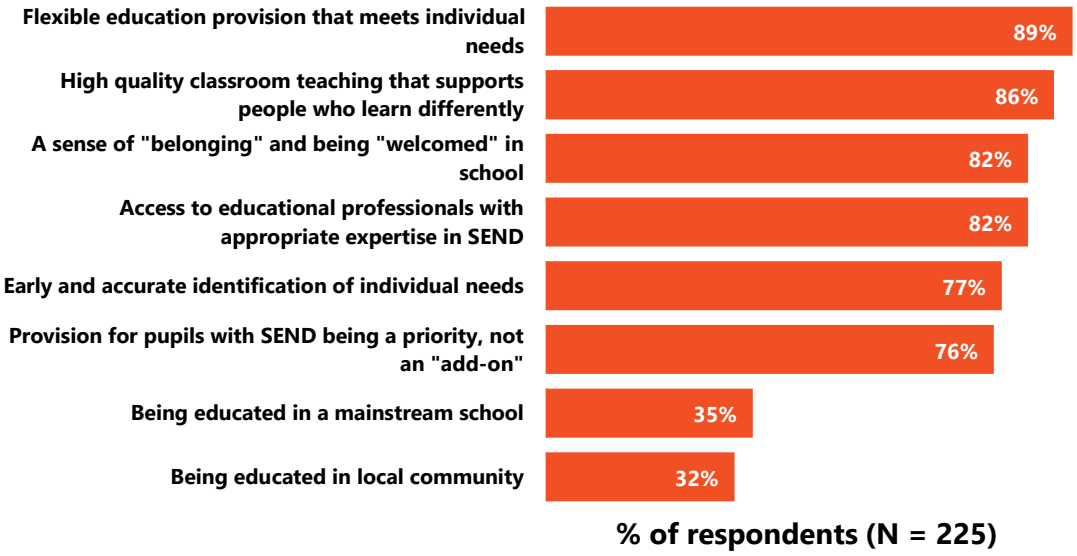
[18] Those in the first two years of their teaching careers

# C. What is inclusion?

Across each group of stakeholders, **we found a common desire to be inclusive**. However, asking stakeholders to define inclusion revealed a **lack of a single, widely understood definition of "inclusion"**. As outlined by nasen in their "Understanding Inclusion" guide[19], some understand inclusion as educating children with SEND in mainstream schools. Some definitions go further, believing that meaningful integration is required within these schools. Others believe that educating children and young people in special schools is the best way to meet their needs, and is therefore an inclusive approach.

However, throughout our research, the specific placement of a child was not typically referenced by stakeholders when they were asked to define inclusion. This is exemplified most clearly by a survey we conducted with parents and carers. When asked to select statements that reflected their definition of inclusion, only around a third (35%) chose "being educated in a mainstream school". The responses to this question are summarised in chart 1.

**Chart 1 – Parent and carer survey: *What does "inclusion" mean to you? (Tick all that apply)* (2024)**




Source: Parent and carer survey carried out as part of our research (2024)

Similarly, the school leaders we interviewed did not consistently have a *shared*, defined vision of SEND inclusion. However, in all of the schools we visited, leaders tended to have established a clear set of principles for inclusion that were shared and understood by staff across the school. Despite this localised approach, there was overlap in what schools believed constituted inclusive practice. Typically, school leaders and staff referenced:

- Ensuring equal opportunity to access the school's curriculum and broader offer, including pastoral support and extracurricular activities
- Involving all pupils as fully as possible in all aspects of school life

[19] nasen (2020), Understanding Inclusion Miniguide

- Treating all pupils as part of the whole school, while enabling them to learn in a manner that is right for them.

Drawing from these findings, in this research, we are defining inclusion as:

**Identifying and supporting the full range of needs through flexible provision, including a broad universal offer, with an emphasis on welcoming all young people and creating a feeling of belonging across the school community**

Our research shows that this has four main principles:

1. An excellent universal offer
2. Flexibility to meet individual needs
3. A supportive culture and ethos
4. Early and accurate identification of needs

These four principles of inclusion rely on the adequate supply of appropriate local provision. This range of provision should include an excellent universal offer embedded in mainstream schools, with the flexibility to meet individual pupil needs outside mainstream schools where required.

These principles reflect the findings of similar research, such as the study by the Office for National Statistics on the educational experiences of young people with SEND[20]. For example, participants in this study agreed that "flexibly meeting individual young people's needs [was] important for them to be able to thrive within their educational experience" and feelings of belonging were identified as a key theme for young people with SEND.

Below we explore each of these four principles in more detail, combining insights from existing research with our findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

## 1. An excellent universal offer

**An education system can only be truly inclusive if the universal offer is strong, and all children have access to high quality teaching and specialist support that is suitable for their needs and supports their ambitions.**

An excellent universal offer is key to inclusion for two principal reasons. Firstly, pupils with SEND are not a minority group within education. In 2019, the National Audit Office found that 40% of all pupils are identified as having SEND at some point in their school career[21]. Secondly, high quality teaching should benefit all pupils, regardless of whether they have an identified SEND and may be able to meet student needs before they escalate and require an identification of SEND. Indeed, when the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) identified five recommendations to support pupils with SEND[22], they emphasised that "good teaching for pupils with SEND is good teaching for all". It is also important to note that this should always be supported by sufficient specific SEND expertise, including all schools having access to specialists like education psychologists.

[20] Office for National Statistics (2022), Educational experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities in England: February to May 2022
[21] National Audit Office (2019), Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in England
[22] Education Endowment Foundation (2020), Special educational needs in mainstream schools

This aspect of inclusion was identified in interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including local authority decision makers, parents and carers. In particular, local authorities could see the benefit of identifying and supporting needs in local, mainstream provision; children and young people's needs would be responded to earlier, reducing the need for EHCPs and high-cost placements. This benefit was identified by the Conservative government in the SEND and AP Improvement Plan[23], which states, "we expect to reduce the need for EHCPs because the needs of more children and young people will be met without them, through ordinarily available provision". Similarly, the SEND Code of Practice sees high quality teaching as effective provision for pupils with SEND[24].

> *"Once we have good mainstream education that is inclusive, we would expect that we can move away from high-cost specialist provision"*
>
> Teaching Union Staff Member

School leaders consistently emphasised the importance of focusing on securing effective "quality first teaching", alongside the appropriate specialist workforce, in order to fully meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND who engaged in our research did not consistently have a positive experience of mainstream lessons. However, there was broad agreement that lessons typically worked best when the teacher introduced concepts gradually and built time into lessons to check in with pupils and enabled them to ask for help.

## 2. Flexibility to meet individual needs

**To ensure inclusion, flexibility must sit alongside an excellent universal offer.** Inclusion is unlikely to be a "one-size-fits-all" approach and interviewed stakeholders, particularly parents and families, spoke of the value of flexibility when it came to supporting children and young people with SEND. Of the 225 surveyed parents, 89% agreed with the statement that inclusion involves "flexible education provision that meets individual needs", which was the highest proportion of any statement.

The 2014 curriculum reforms and accountability measures were seen by many school leaders interviewed in this research as a key driver for less-inclusive practice. School leaders were concerned that these accountability measures, and the current role of Ofsted, could create a real or perceived barrier to inclusion. A similar pattern has been observed in post-16 education, with a further narrowing of subject choices in 2024[25].

> *"Behaviour policies should be written from a needs perspective rather than a control and disciplinary perspective"*
>
> Parent / Carer

The following were suggested by parents, carers and young people with SEND as examples of flexible approaches that would be more inclusive to children and young people with SEND:

- **Flexible curriculum:** Catering for pupils with a range of educational needs and abilities
- **Flexible timetabling:** Allowing pupils to start earlier or later, or embedding staggered start and finish times throughout the school day

[23] DfE (2023), Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan
[24] DfE (2014), SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years
[25] NFER (August 2024), Subject choice trends in post-16 education in England: Investigating subject choice over the past 20 years

- **Flexible policies:** For example, allowing a pupil to wear their PE kit instead of standard school uniform, or adapting homework expectations
- **Flexible setting:** Using a mixture of learning environments, such as spending one day in a mainstream school each week with the rest spent at a work placement, being home educated or in a therapeutic environment

These sorts of flexible approaches were evident in some of the schools we visited. Mainstream schools with the strongest evidence of effectively meeting needs had flexible curriculum pathways and some level of distinct specialist provision. Some examples of flexible provision and curriculums are outlined in the boxes below. To improve inclusion, some schools had developed in-house SEND provision, where pupils with SEND were taught by subject specialists. This was reported as effective both for the learning of pupils and for developing teachers' skills in teaching pupils with SEND.

**Example: Flexible education settings in practice**

Mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision (ARP) were generally better able to effectively meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Many schools had developed further specialist provision alongside their ARPs. A small proportion of pupils spend all, most, or some of their time attending either the ARP or school funded specialist provision and follow an adapted or bespoke curriculum. Pupils receiving this provision attended mainstream lessons where deemed appropriate and where pupil needs could still be met effectively. The pupils we spoke with were typically positive about the teaching and support they received in these provisions. There were also several examples of this approach leading to pupils successfully attending mainstream provision full time.

**Example: Flexible curriculum in practice**

Leaders in most schools reported that having a "set 4" or "nurture group" for core subjects enabled them to cater more effectively for pupils with more complex SEND needs. There was some indication that this helped pupils learn well. However, where attainment varied markedly across the class, there was a risk that some pupils may not receive a sufficiently challenging curriculum. In addition, school leaders had not typically evaluated the impact of this approach on social inclusion.

We also heard from several stakeholders that inflexibility around attendance, often driven by mandatory data reporting, sometimes acted to discourage flexibility. In some cases, this resulted in the harmful situation where young people with SEND were offered the choice to either attend school on time and every day, or otherwise to drop out.

Where the flexibility to meet individual needs is not in place, this can lead to an increased likelihood of a pupil refusing to attend school, or dropping out. Previous research has found that the number of children being home educated rose by 12% from 2022 to 2023, double the 6% rise from 2021 to 2022. Schools not meeting needs was identified as a key driver of this move to home education[26].

[26] Schools Week (2024), Rate of pupils leaving for home education doubles

## 3. A supportive culture and ethos

**When asked to define inclusion, many stakeholders referred to a "sense" or "feeling" of inclusion.** This is likely realised through social, as well as academic, inclusion. This was particularly the case for young people with SEND as well as their parents, carers, and families. When surveyed, 82% of parents and carers reported that inclusion meant a sense of "belonging" and being "welcomed" in school. Similar findings emerged from focus groups, where the following components of an inclusive culture were identified:

- **Understanding needs:** Schools, services and local authorities which had a good understanding of a child or young person's needs were seen as inclusive. This included seeing beyond the diagnosis and content of an EHCP to understand the child or young person as an individual
- **Feeling welcomed:** Parents, carers and families wanted their child to feel welcomed at school and that they belonged as an important member of the school community
- **Working in partnership:** Parents, carers and families valued feeling that they are a trusted and respected member of the team around their child. This included both respecting parental choice around provision as well as building strong relationships and communication

Pupils with SEND further emphasised the importance of culture and ethos. For these pupils, inclusion meant:

- Not being left out or "excluded" by peers
- Feeling that they were understood and that they belonged
- Feeling well supported to learn
- Feeling safe
- Feeling that teachers and other staff "got them"

> *"[Inclusion is] being part of a place that feels like home"*
>
> School pupil with SEND

Some schools valued social, as well as academic, inclusion and had deployed specific strategies to enable this. These included mixed tutor groups of resource provision and mainstream pupils, inclusive extracurricular activities, and friendship skills groups.

These findings are supported by other research. For example, in the EEF guidance on supporting children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools, a key recommendation is that schools should "create a positive and supportive environment"[27]. Specific examples suggested by the guidance include seating plans and supportive clubs and groups where friendships can develop. Research conducted by the Office for National Statistics also found that a sense of belonging and good relationships between staff and pupils were key for a positive educational experience for young people with SEND[28].

**Example: Social inclusion in extra-curricular activities**

In several schools visited as part of this research, pupils with SEND clearly felt included in non-academic activities like clubs where they were able to interact with other pupils with a shared interest. This included chess, coding, and orchestra. This fed into a wider, explicit mission to celebrate difference and acceptance across the school.

[27] Education Endowment Foundation (2020), Special educational needs in mainstream schools

[28] Office for National Statistics (2022), Educational experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities in England: February to May 2022

## 4. Early and accurate identification of needs

**Early identification of needs was identified as a component of inclusion by a variety of stakeholders.** The previous government's SEND and AP Improvement Plan lists early identification as a core aim, stating that, "the system will provide earlier, more accurate and more consistent identification of need, targeted support to address those needs and timely access to specialist services and support"[29]. Strategy and policy documents from local authorities and academy trusts we reviewed also tended to list early identification as a priority.

Similarly, a key concern for parents and carers who were interviewed was ensuring their children's needs were assessed and accurately identified at an early stage. This early identification must also capture the full range of needs, including any health or social care needs. Without early identification, parents and carers were concerned that their children's needs would not be met, leading to distress, exclusion and poor outcomes. However, this did not necessarily equate to a *diagnosis* of SEND. Parents, carers and families see a diagnosis as primarily a tool for accessing support; accurate identification of need at an appropriate point was more important to many than a specific diagnosis.

> *"The length of time it takes to get an EHCP is itself not inclusive. If we do get an EHCP, it will have taken over two years from recognising my son had special needs [...] to getting the EHCP"*
>
> Parent / Carer

Kindred Squared's 2023 School Readiness Survey found that large and growing numbers of young people are now starting school without the required skills to access learning and development opportunities in reception[30]. For example, the survey reported that 37% of pupils starting reception are "unable to listen and respond to basic instructions". Additional concern around early years provision for young people with SEND increases the need to better support school readiness for this group. The issue of school readiness and the growing need in early years pupils were echoed in our interviews and focus groups.

[29] DfE (2023), Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan
[30] Kindred[2] (2024), School Readiness Survey Report

# D. The benefits of inclusion

Having outlined a definition of inclusion, it is important to explain why inclusion is so important. From a combination of previous research, focus groups with young people with SEND, and testimonies from parents and carers, we have identified five key themes on the benefits of inclusion:

## 1. Emotional benefits for young people with SEND and their families

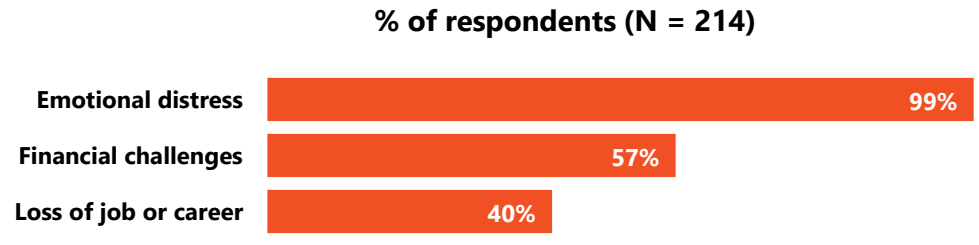
**Key benefit 1:** Almost all parents and carers surveyed had experienced emotional distress as a result of non-inclusive practice

Previous research has identified clear emotional benefits of inclusion for young people with SEND. For example, an ONS study[31], which involved surveying 62 11-to-16 year olds with SEND, found evidence that inclusive practice can help reduce emotional distress, including anxiety, anger and frustration. The ONS found that a key factor in this was the school meeting the educational support needs of pupils with SEND. In addition, inclusive practice such as good communication between schools and families was also found to "have a positive impact on young people's experiences at school".

> *They have a sensory room upstairs and I love it, it's amazing. I say it's easier to calm down in there because it's like dark. You can have fun lights on, it's not flashy, there's no noise, it's quiet. So, if I'm getting overwhelmed, or anyone's getting overwhelmed or anxious, it's easy just to go into the sensory room.*
>
> Young person with SEND
> ONS (2022), Educational experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities in England: February to May 2022

Similarly, our survey of parents and carers found that almost all (99%) respondents have suffered emotional distress caused by non-inclusive practice. For many parents and carers, non-inclusive practice in mainstream schools has led to a belief that their children's emotional needs are best met in specialist provision. For example, one parent said that their "son's emotional wellbeing has been met more effectively in a SEN school". These experiences present another barrier to the inclusion of young people with SEND in mainstream education.

**Chart 2 –*What has been the impact of non-inclusive practice? (Tick all that apply)* (2024)**




Source: Parent and carer survey carried out as part of our research (2024)

[31] ONS (2022), Educational experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities in England: February to May 2022

## 2. Stronger engagement in learning

**Key benefit 2:** More effective inclusion drives engagement in learning, including boosting school attendance

Many parents and carers surveyed in our research outlined how inclusive environments made it much easier for young people with SEND to engage with learning. They described how inclusive approaches encouraged much better engagement in school and helped to ensure young people with SEND "can access the curriculum" where possible.

Research into the growing problems around school attendance, and particularly emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)[32], has found that non-inclusive practice is an important driver of EBSA. One of the key findings of ImpactEd's recent research on the drivers of attendance was that "school belonging is a key driver of attendance"[33]. Research in Hackney found a clear overlap between EBSA and SEND (particularly ASD)[34], and supported the idea that inclusion of young people with SEND can be an important factor for avoiding school absence and therefore helping to ensure engagement in learning.

> *Everything is adapted to my child's ability, and they incorporate the things he's really interested in, in order to motivate and engage him.*
>
> Parent / carer

## 3. Avoiding financial stress for families

**Key benefit 3:** Over half of parents and carers surveyed had experienced financial challenges as a result of non-inclusive practice

Many parents and carers described the financial stresses that non-inclusive practice had caused. In our survey of parents and carers, half had financial challenges as a result of these practices, with a sizeable minority saying they had lost their job. In some cases, this financial challenge was a result of opting to pay for specialist independent provision, while others said they had to give up their jobs or careers in order to look after their child and fight for the provision they felt they needed.

> *I am a parent who could no longer commit to a career path because of the need to "manage" the experts and my learning about the "system" all while being a parent. The emotional distress is unimaginable unless you have also been through it. The lack of understanding is sometimes a shock dealing with individuals.*
>
> Parent / carer

[32] EBSA refers to children and young people who find attending school particularly difficult due to emotional and mental health factors

[33] ImpactEd (2024), Understanding Attendance: Findings on the drivers of pupil absence from over 30,000 young people in England

[34] Hackney Independent Parents (2023), Emotionally Based School Avoidance in Hackney: a survey of local parents

## 4. Stronger outcomes for young people with SEND

**Key benefit 4:** Non-inclusive practice can have a negative impact on the education, health, wellbeing and labour market outcomes of young people with SEND

Non-inclusive practice has been found to have a negative impact on the education, health and wellbeing, as well as future labour market outcomes, of young people with SEND. For example, a recent study by the Education Policy Institute found that suspensions in school appear to impact outcomes into early adulthood. Specifically, education, employment and health outcomes were worse for those who had been suspended and tended to be even worse for those with multiple suspensions[35].

Furthermore, a review of the literature on the effect of school placement on outcomes found that pupils with SEND who are educated in "more integrated settings [significantly] outperform those in less integrated settings on both academic and social outcome measures"[36]. Similarly, research into the experience of young people with Down's syndrome found that "students with Down's syndrome who attend mainstream classrooms, compared to those who attend special education, were found to have better expressive language and literacy skills and fewer behavioural challenges"[37].

While these findings are focused on the impact of integration in mainstream environments, rather than inclusion, they suggest there may be both academic and social benefits to creating inclusive school environments for young people with SEND.

## 5. Social benefits for all young people

**Key benefit 5:** There are wider social benefits for all young people from being in an inclusive environment

There has also been research into the impact of inclusion on those with no identified SEND. A meta-analysis found that "some research indicates that non-disabled students who are educated in inclusive classrooms hold less prejudicial views and are more accepting of people who are different from themselves"[38]. Other studies found an increase in "acceptance, understanding, and tolerance" of differences and "more opportunities to have friendships with students with disabilities"

*There is clear and consistent evidence that inclusive educational settings can confer substantial short- and long-term benefits for students with and without disabilities*

Hehir et al. (2016), A summary of the evidence on inclusive education

[35] Education Policy Institute (2024), Early adult outcomes for suspended pupils
[36] Young and Filler (2015), A meta-analysis of the effects of placement on academic and social skill outcome measures of students with disabilities
[37] Buckley et al. (2006), A comparison of mainstream and special education for teenagers with Down syndrome: implications for parents and teachers
[38] Hehir et al. (2016), A summary of the evidence on inclusive education

# E. Key challenges in London

Our research revealed three key challenges that present barriers to the inclusion of young people with SEND in London's schools:

- **Funding to effectively meet the needs of children and young people with SEND is insufficient**, with many London boroughs being brought into DfE support programmes such as Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value.
- **London's SEND cohort is continuing to grow,** with seven boroughs now having more than a fifth of school pupils identified with SEND. The capacity, capability and financial pressures in mainstream settings make inclusion more difficult and less consistent across the capital. This is partly driving the increased use of independent and non-maintained and special school provision.
- **The workforce is not sufficient to meet need,** and the growth in support staff is not matching the increase in pupils with SEND. Instead, there has been a large increase in the use of agencies to source teaching assistants, which presents a potential risk to inclusion.

Each of these challenges is explored in more detail below.

## 1. Insufficient funding to effectively meet needs

**Key challenge 1**: Funding is insufficient to effectively meet the needs of pupils with SEND, and access to support is often restricted by long waiting lists

The growing cohort of children and young people with SEND has put pressure on local authority and school funding. This has not kept pace with growth, meaning funding is currently insufficient to adequately meet the needs of this cohort. In some cases this is more pronounced in London due to the higher costs faced by schools and local authorities.

School leaders are clear that funding is now insufficient. In a recent survey, the NAHT found just 1% of senior leaders believed they have enough funding to meet the needs of their pupils with SEND[39]. Furthermore, in a survey commissioned by the DfE in February and March 2024, a lack of funding was cited as the most common barrier schools across England face in supporting pupils with SEND among primary school leaders (95%), secondary school leaders (84%) and special school leaders (69%)[40].

> *We are asking schools to meet a greater level of need for less money*
>
> Local authority stakeholder

SEND service provision has been need-led, with funding constrained and inflexible, meaning that as the SEND cohort has grown the funding available for inclusion has become increasingly stretched. In our research, we consistently heard from stakeholders across the sector that they would be able to be more inclusive if they had more funding.

For local authorities, insufficient high needs funding from government and rising need for support is putting intense pressure on SEND budgets. In striving to fulfil their statutory duties for

[39] TES (May 2024), Just 1% of heads say SEND funding meets pupil needs
[40] DfE (September 2024). School and college voice: February 2024.

children and young people with SEND, many local authorities, including London boroughs, have significant deficits in their SEND budgets. This is despite the support for over half of all London local authorities from the government's *Safety Valve* and *Delivering Better Value* programmes, which both aim to support local authorities with SEND budget overspends and work towards financial sustainability. Currently, eleven London local authorities are receiving support through the Safety Valve programme and eight are part of the Delivering Better Value programme.

> *Funding has not kept pace with the increase in need*
>
> Local authority stakeholder

Access to funding is often restricted to those with EHCPs and this can lead to families pursuing formal diagnoses and EHCPs to ensure their child's needs are met. However, access to this additional support is often hampered by long waits for appointments with specialists and EHCP assessments. These long waits risk the escalation of unaddressed needs and associated trauma and distress. However, some local authorities, including Camden Council, have taken a more flexible approach, as outlined in the case study below, where funding is made more responsive to need, rather than being bound up in the bureaucracy of statutory assessments.

> *Her mental health deteriorating on CAHMS waiting list over 2 years with no emotional support*
>
> Parent / Carer

**Case Study: Funding through Exceptional Needs Grants**

Camden Council have elected to fund all nursery, primary and secondary schools with "*more than the first £6,000 element 2 funding so that they can make provision up to £11,000 for pupils where their assessments show they need that level of support,* ***without the need to access top-up funding through an EHC plan***"*.

Their Local Area SEND Strategy outlines how this funding is provided, through Exceptional Needs Grants (ENGs), in a way that is a "*faster and less bureaucratic way of accessing funding than a statutory EHC needs assessment.*" They have been providing these grants since September 2018.

School SENDCOs all participate in *Inclusion Forums* across one of five clusters, working together with associated SEND professionals like educational psychologists. Each Inclusion Forum meets every half-term to consider requests for exceptional needs grants, which come with the same need thresholds and funding as EHCPs. Schools and parents or carers collaborate on funding requests, which are usually agreed for one or two years but can be extended.

While it is hard to isolate the specific impact of this without more detailed research, the EHCP cohort in Camden's schools has grown at a much slower rate than both the England and London averages since 2018. Additionally, one of the schools visited in this research was a mainstream secondary school in Camden who told us that this model was quicker and less burdensome than the traditional top-up funding route.

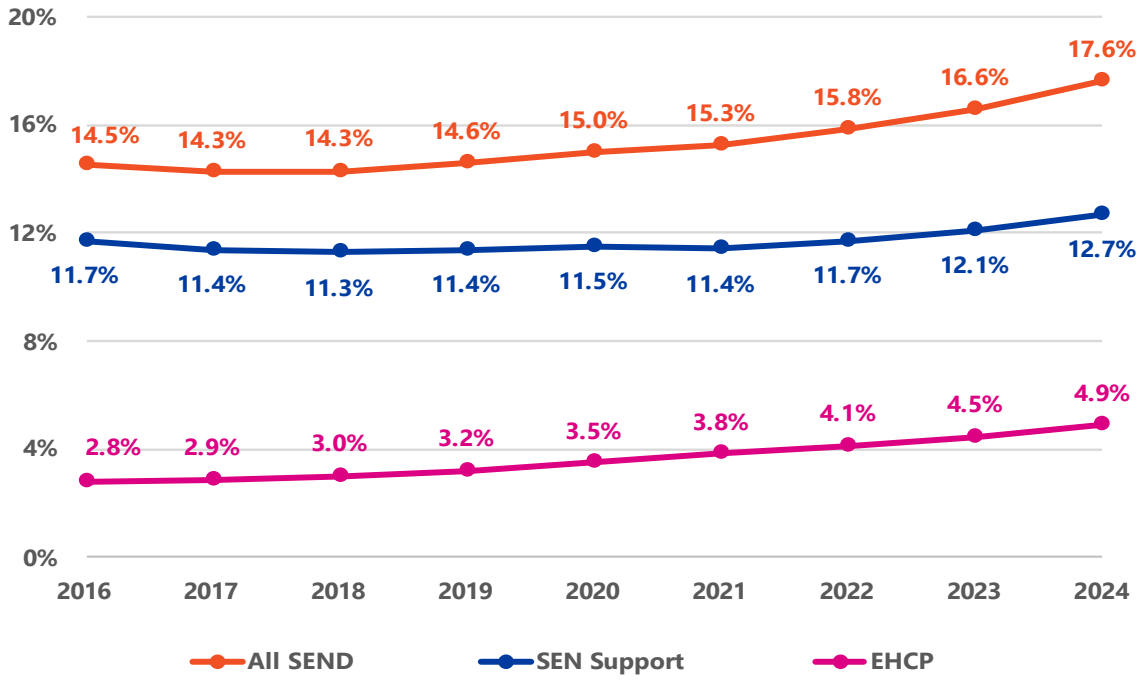
*SENDIASS Camden, Funding for SEN in Mainstream

## 2. Rapidly growing SEND cohorts and pressure on school places

**Key challenge 2:** The growth in the cohort of pupils with EHCPs has not been matched by the growth in appropriate school places, resourced to meet needs effectively

As is seen across England, the proportion of pupils within all London's schools with SEND is continuing to increase, as shown in chart 3. As of January 2024, pupils with SEND make up 17.6% of the pupil population, with 4.9% of pupils having an EHCP and 12.7% on SEN Support. In fact, seven London boroughs now have more than a fifth of their pupils with SEND, an increase from just a single borough in 2023.

**Chart 3 – SEND cohort sizes in all London's schools**

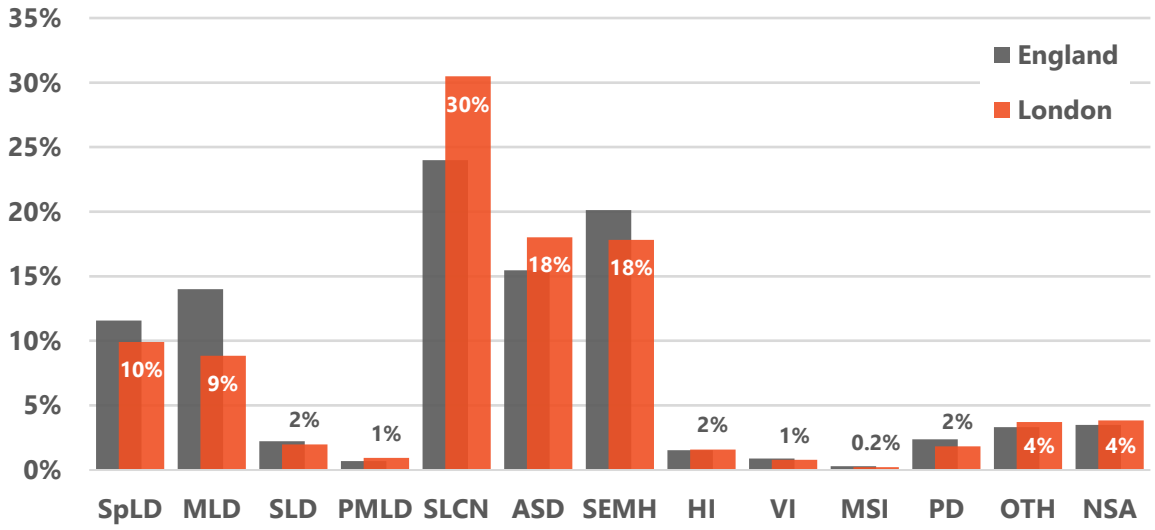



Source: DfE Schools, pupils and their characteristics publication (2024) These figures include independent schools

Among London's SEND cohort, the most common primary needs are Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH). In particular, SLCN and ASD have been consistently more frequently identified as the primary needs of pupils with SEND in London compared to elsewhere in England. In London, 30% of pupils with SEND have SLCN as their primary need, compared to 24% across England[41]. Similarly, 18% of London's pupils with SEND have ASD as their primary need, compared to 15% in England. These differences in needs have implications for the school provision and associated support services required. The primary need breakdowns of the SEND cohort in London and England are shown in chart 4.

[41] London has a large population with English as an additional language (EAL), and research for the DfE by the Better Communication Research Programme found evidence to suggest that having EAL can sometimes be conflated with having SLCN

**Chart 4 – Primary need[42] breakdown of the SEND cohort in London and England (2024)**




Source: DfE Schools, pupils and their characteristics publication (2024)

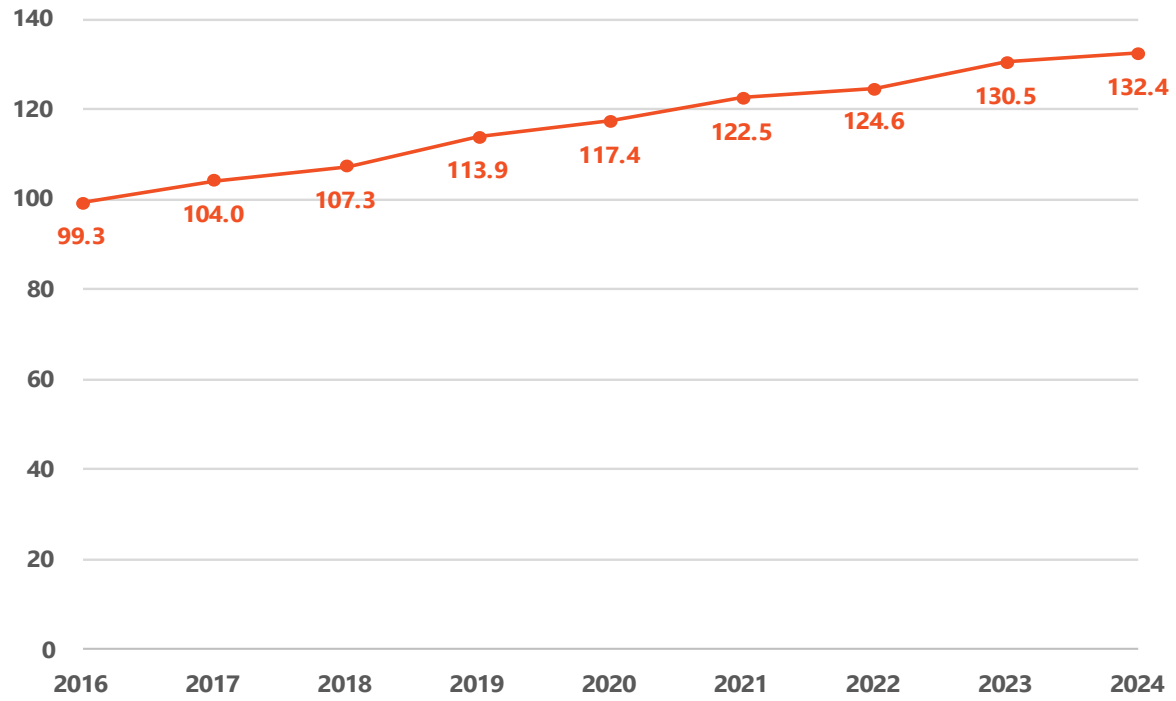
Alongside this growing number of pupils with SEND is an increase in the number of requests for EHCP assessments, suggesting a rise in the number of pupils with SEND needs that are not effectively met through SEN Support. The rate of requests had increased to 0.72% of the 0-24 population by January 2024, double the proportion of 0 to 24 year olds for whom an EHCP assessment had been requested in 2016. The increasing number of EHCP requests and the work associated with processing these, as well as constraints on local authority resources, may have contributed to the delayed issuing of EHCPs. These delays are a key challenge for inclusion as they prevent those pupils with more complex needs from receiving the support they require, and risk escalation of needs. In the year to January 2024, only seven in ten EHCPs in London were issued within the statutory 20-week timescale. This meant almost 3,500 pupils having to wait longer to receive the full support required. This sits on top of the thousands of young people, as outlined by the Children's Commissioner, facing huge waits to receive diagnoses[43].

The increased incidence of SEND in London combined with insufficient resources and funding poses challenges for inclusion of pupils in their local, mainstream school. As a result, local authorities are increasingly having to rely on the use of special schools and independent provision. Since 2016, there has been a large increase in the number of pupils with EHCPs attending independent or non-maintained settings (increased by 44%) and state-funded special schools (increased by 55%). This is despite an even larger increase in the number of London pupils with EHCPs attending mainstream schools.

The number of young people in London's EHCP cohort attending state-funded special schools has risen by 55%, from 13,700 in 2016 to 21,200 as of January 2024. However, across this same time period, the number of state-funded special schools in London has only increased by 16%, from 138 to 160 schools. This has led to an increase in the average number of pupils per special school from 99 in 2016 to 132 in 2024, as demonstrated in chart 5.

[42] See Appendix 1 for primary need definitions
[43] Children's Commissioner, Waiting times for assessment and support for autism, ADHD and other neurodevelopmental conditions (2024)

**Chart 5 – Average number of pupils with an EHCP in London state-funded special schools**




Source: DfE Schools, pupils and their characteristics publication (2024)

This indicates that, to keep up with the growing need for specialist SEND provision, special schools are having to increase their number of places, in many cases working beyond their intended capacity. In fact, as of August 2024, the latest published DfE data shows more than 70 London special schools with total roll numbers above their listed capacity[44], presenting questions regarding the education and support that these over-capacity schools are able to provide.

> *There are no [state-funded special school] places for pupils in the local area… The rising needs in the school meant that we needed to find CPD [continued professional development] on SEND quickly.*
>
> Leader, primary school
>
> Ofsted (May 2024), Independent review of teachers' professional development in schools: phase 2 findings

Furthermore, many special school pupils in London have to travel outside their local area to access their education. The proportion of special school pupils attending schools outside their resident local authority has been consistently higher in London compared to the England average. In 2024, 16% of pupils with SEND travelled out of their home local authority to attend school, compared to the England average of 9%. While this will be partly a product of the geography and interconnectedness of London local authorities, this presents an added challenge for schools and local authorities in the coordinating and commissioning of provision for pupils with SEND. This can also be a barrier to school attendance for pupils with more complex needs who may struggle, either physically or emotionally, with the travel requirements.

[44] Get Information about Schools

To tackle the local capacity issue, some schools and local authorities have pursued innovative new partnerships between mainstream and special schools. In particular, as school rolls drop in many areas of London, some mainstream school buildings have been repurposed to provide the specialist provision needed in the local area. The case study below outlines an example of this from Lewisham.

**Case Study: Repurposing existing school buildings - Drumbeat School and Turnham Academy**

Lewisham Council was presented with two schools with conflicting issues:

- Drumbeat School, a local special school, did not have the capacity to meet growing local need
- Turnham Academy, a mainstream primary school with falling pupil numbers, with the school at under half capacity

Working with both schools, Lewisham developed a proposal to establish specialist provision, as part of Drumbeat School, for 54 primary-age pupils with SEND on the site of Turnham Academy. This established an inclusive shared site, while addressing the challenges facing both schools.

## 3. Insufficient growth in the workforce

**Key challenge 3:** The workforce available to schools has not kept pace with the needs of the growing cohort of pupils with SEND. This has been particularly pronounced in London

With the increasing proportions of pupils with SEND in London's schools, it is critical that the workforce also grows to meet the needs of these pupils.

One takeaway from our school visits was that support staff, such as teaching assistants, play a key role in providing additional support and shaping the school experience for pupils with SEND. While teachers are responsible for the education of all pupils in their class, they often draw on support from teaching assistants or SEND specialists to help meet the needs of pupils with SEND. However, the growth in the teaching assistant and SEND specialist workforce has not matched the growth in the size of the cohort of pupils with SEND in London's schools.

In London, while there has been a 21% increase in the number of pupils with SEND in state-funded schools[45] since 2016, the size of the teaching assistant workforce has *fallen* by 7% across the same period. Furthermore, local authority employed educational psychologists, who play a key role in the identification and support for pupils with SEND, have only seen a very small increase in numbers over the last 10 years. The number in London rose from 348 in 2013 to 354 in 2024 (just a 2% increase), meaning a substantial growth in each psychologist's caseloads. Across England, the number of local authority employed educational psychologists grew 48% since 2013, suggesting that this particular issue is more pronounced in London[46].

Only three of the nine English regions have seen a fall in their teaching assistant workforce since 2016, with the 7% fall seen in London almost double the next largest fall of 4% seen in the South West. This is in contrast to the England average, where there has been a 2% growth in the

[45] State-funded schools include both mainstream primary and secondary schools, as well as special schools, pupil-referral units and state-funded alternative provision.
[46] Data from the DfE School workforce in England publication

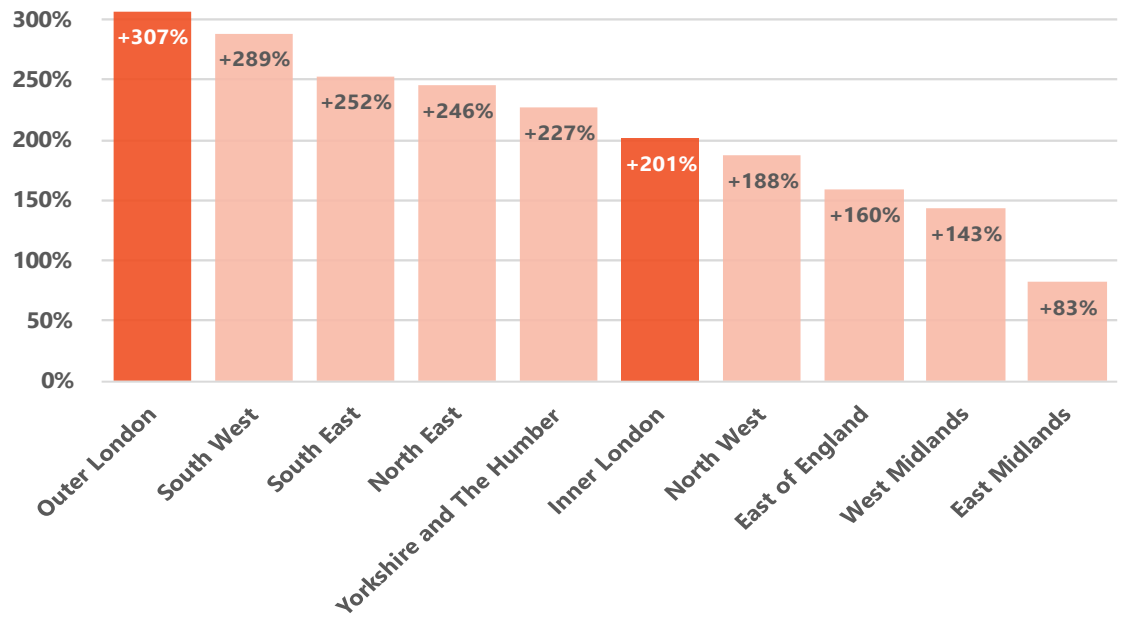
teaching assistant workforce. Workforce insufficiency seems particularly problematic in Inner London, where there has been a 15% growth in the size of the cohort of pupils with SEND, but a 13% *reduction* in the size of the teaching assistant workforce. While there have been some attempts made to better support teaching assistants with the skills they need to support pupils with SEND[47], there are concerns about the ability to address the scale of need.

As growth in the permanent workforce has not kept pace with need, there has been a surge in the use of third-party teaching assistants, as shown in chart 6. These are teaching assistants who are not directly employed by the school. Over the last ten years, there has been a 245% growth in the use of third-party teaching assistants in London, driven in particular by the growth in Outer London (+307%). While there has also been an increase across all regions in England, with an average growth of 203%, the rate of growth is greater in London.

> *[My son's experience was affected by the] absence of 1:2:1 support due to short staffing. [He was assigned] several different LSAs in a span of 15 months due to staff retention issues. [There was a] lack of knowledge and appropriate training given to LSAs*
>
> Parent / carer

The reduction in the workforce of locally-employed teaching assistants and increased reliance on third-party teaching assistants in London may present a risk to the inclusion of pupils with SEND. This is due to the potential inconsistency of support provided by different staff, as well as short-term staff being unable to develop the depth of relationships often required to fully understand pupils' individual needs and deliver the most effective support.

**Chart 6 – 10 year growth in the use of third-party teaching assistants**




Source: DfE School workforce in England publication

[47] For example, the proposed specialist teaching assistant apprenticeship

# F. How inclusive are London's schools?

Having identified the key funding, provision and workforce challenges to inclusion of young people with SEND in London's schools, this section presents a wide range of evidence from our research on the current effectiveness of inclusion in London. This aims to show how the challenges discussed in the previous section may be impacting the school lives of young people with SEND. We explore both qualitative and quantitative data on inclusion in London's schools and analyse the influence of school type, pupil demographics and accountability systems, looking specifically at:

1. **Testimonies of non-inclusive practice in London**, with schools unable to flexibly meet the needs of pupils
2. Specific concerns around **inclusion in early years**, including the rise of more complex needs and the difficulties accessing provision
3. **Suspensions** of pupils with SEND, exploring the variation in rates of suspension across London's schools
4. **Absence** of pupils with SEND, focussing on those missing a large proportion of school
5. How well the current **accountability framework** appears to address inclusion
6. The effect of **school and pupil demographics** on inclusion in London
7. Evidence of **off-rolling** of pupils with SEND from London's mainstream schools
8. **Attainment and progress gaps** in London's schools
9. **Testimonies of inclusive practice**, where families were involved in decisions and adjustments were made to meet young people's needs

We found that the overall picture in London is mixed. While there was some clear and compelling evidence of inclusive practice, we also encountered many examples of, often very stark, non-inclusive practice. This variation is clear in the testimonies we heard from research participants, as well as from the data on suspensions and absence rates, and the rates of young people with SEND leaving their school at non-standard times. Both non-inclusive and inclusive practice can be found across all types of London schools, including those with outstanding Ofsted judgements. There is overlap between non-inclusive practice and higher rates of economic disadvantage, as well as some evidence that Black pupils with SEND face a higher risk of non-inclusive practice.

The variation in experience is most strikingly demonstrated by the results from our survey of 225 parents and carers of young people with SEND. Of these, 50% of respondents were able to share examples of "particularly *effective* inclusion", while 64% shared examples of non-inclusive practice. **Almost half of those surveyed were able to share examples of *both* particularly effective inclusion *and* of non-inclusive practice**, exemplifying the mixed picture across London.

## 1. Experiences of non-inclusive practice in London

**Key finding 1**: Inadequate or delayed meeting of individual needs were the most common examples of non-inclusive practice

The parent and carer survey revealed a range of examples of non-inclusive practice, including many that are not picked up in the data on suspension, absence or school leaver rates discussed below.

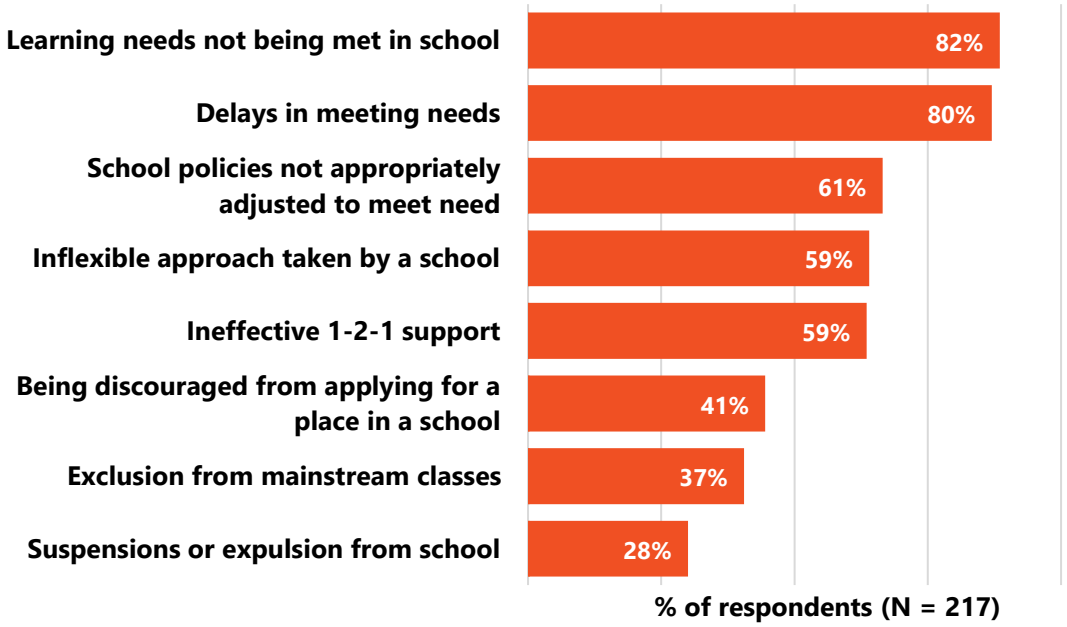
The most common experience of non-inclusive practice was inadequate meeting of needs, with both "learning needs not being met" and "delays in meeting needs" experienced by more than four in every five families. These concerns reiterate the importance of schools adopting a more flexible approach. Interestingly, this type of non-inclusive practice was far more commonly reported among survey respondents than suspensions or permanent exclusion from school.

Similarly, with 41% reporting they were discouraged from applying to a particular school and 37% experiencing exclusion from mainstream classes, our survey showed a worrying level of young people with SEND being covertly excluded from education.

> *[There was a] lack of understanding about needs and not listening to parents who have expressed concerns about needs*
>
> Parent / carer

> *[I was] told [by the school] to take my child out of school and electively home school because they cannot teach him*
>
> Parent / carer

**Chart 7 – Parent and carer survey: *What non-inclusive practice have you and your family experienced? (Tick all that apply)* (2024)**




Source: Parent and carer survey carried out as part of our research (2024)

Survey respondents were also given the opportunity to submit specific experiences of non-inclusive practice, and 143 respondents shared their experiences. The most common concerns were expressed over a lack of training and understanding of individual needs, inflexible school approach and a school not meeting, or even refusing to meet, a child's needs.

In addition, parents and carers reported their concerns over social isolation, exclusion from classes and activities, inadequate resources, lack of support and provision, not adhering to EHCPs, their concerns not taken seriously, as well as a lack of advice, transparency and communication.

> *[Our] son missed a year of school with no offer of an alternative which led to isolation and decrease in mood and mental health.*
>
> Parent / carer

There were also several safeguarding concerns raised by parents about some teachers' and senior leaders' behaviour. Examples from the parent and carer survey referenced the way concerns were handled, as well as examples of staff shouting at pupils with SEND, disability discrimination and accusations of emotional mistreatment.

> *Previous school [had] draconian strict rules so my child was anxious all day. [There was] no support, understanding or recognising Autism [and] no understanding about simple adjustments such as fidget toys. [There were] shouting teachers and fear in pupils.*
>
> Parent / carer

> *How we are treated when we raise concerns mirrors emotional abuse. It's heart breaking*
>
> Parent / carer

**Figure 2 – Examples of specific experiences of non-inclusive practice**

> *Rewards-based behavioural policies that cause [...] distress. Unskilled teachers and LSAs. Poor communication/unsatisfactory IEP meetings. Low expectations of my child's attainment*

> *Lack of understanding from school staff, lack of willingness to think outside the box, reactive and not proactive. No early intervention before the problem escalates out of control*

> *Lack of access to a quiet space at school when they become overwhelmed and either not noticing my child is becoming distressed or punishing them for becoming distressed*

> *School uniform to be worn even though child had sensory issues and anxiety and also singled out in corridor by Head for it*

> *Lack of cohesion among teaching staff, support staff and SLT. Despite an EHCP, it is not followed by all, requiring parental intervention. Too little focus on peer inclusion, mainly academic and personal*

> *Excluded from assemblies and Christmas activities because "would not cope"*

Source: Parent and carer survey carried out as part of our research (2024)

## 2. Concerns around inclusion in early years in London

**Key finding 2**: Despite growing SEND need in early years, identification is often too slow, and some providers are reluctant to meet needs

We found a rise in the need and complexity of SEND in early years, alongside concern from parents and carers that children's needs are not being identified early enough and that provision is lacking or hard to access.

The rise in need among early years pupils is particularly pronounced in London. In 2023, 28.5% of all new EHCPs in London were issued to those under five years old. This was the highest proportion of any region in England and the proportion has been rising in London since 2017. Alongside this rise in numbers, many local authority stakeholders reported an increased complexity of need among early years pupils, particularly in the ASD cohort. Some specifically noted a rising number of young people with ASD alongside another associated difficulty. Indeed, at 8.7% in 2024, London had the highest proportion of under 5 year olds with a primary need of ASD of any region in England.

Given this concern, we ran a themed focus group with parents and carers of early years pupils with SEND. From this, two distinct themes emerged:

1. Families felt that identification of needs was not early enough. This did not necessarily mean a medical diagnosis, but it was felt that needs being understood earlier would have helped to better address them. In addition, families felt that any identification of need was a result of them being proactive and learning how the system worked, and which professionals needed to be involved. Delays were also exacerbated by long waiting lists for assessment, diagnosis and interventions. In a survey conducted in October 2023, around a quarter (24%) of families in London reported that they had received no visits from a health visitor before their child started school[48].
2. Parents and carers felt that nurseries were reluctant to take pupils with SEND or to make reasonable adjustments. This reflects findings from Coram's 2024 childcare survey, which found that 63% of local authorities across England were concerned about childcare sufficiency for children with SEND[49]. Additionally, there were concerns about approaching the transition into primary school.

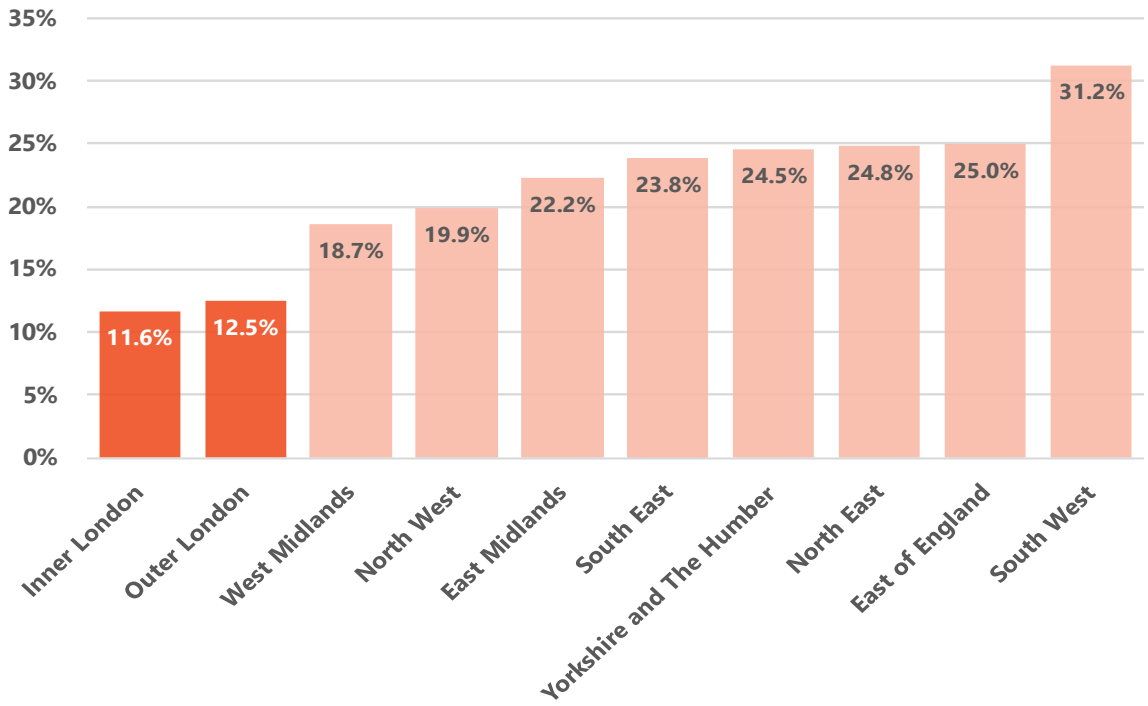
## 3. Suspensions of pupils with SEND

**Key finding 3**: While suspension rates are lower than elsewhere, the odds of a London pupil with SEND being suspended are around 2.5 times higher than a London pupil without SEND

London's pupils with SEND, on average, see lower suspension (previously known as fixed term exclusions) rates than their peers with SEND across England. For example, as shown below, the suspension rate of pupils with an EHCP in 2022/23 was 11.6% and 12.5% in Inner and Outer London respectively. The next lowest regional suspension rate for pupils with EHCPs was in the West Midlands, where the rate was 18.7%, around 50% higher than in London.

[48] Kindred Squared (2024) School Readiness Survey
[49] Coram (2024), Childcare Survey 2024

**Chart 8 – Overall suspension rate of pupils with an EHCP across England (2022/23)**




Source: DfE Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England publication (2023)

Permanent exclusions (expulsions) of pupils with SEND are also less common in London than elsewhere, with Inner London having the lowest permanent exclusion rate of both pupils with SEN Support and those with EHCPs, at 0.12% and 0.08% respectively. Outer London has the next smallest permanent exclusion rate of pupils with EHCPs at 0.10%, although only the third lowest permanent exclusion rate for those with SEN Support.

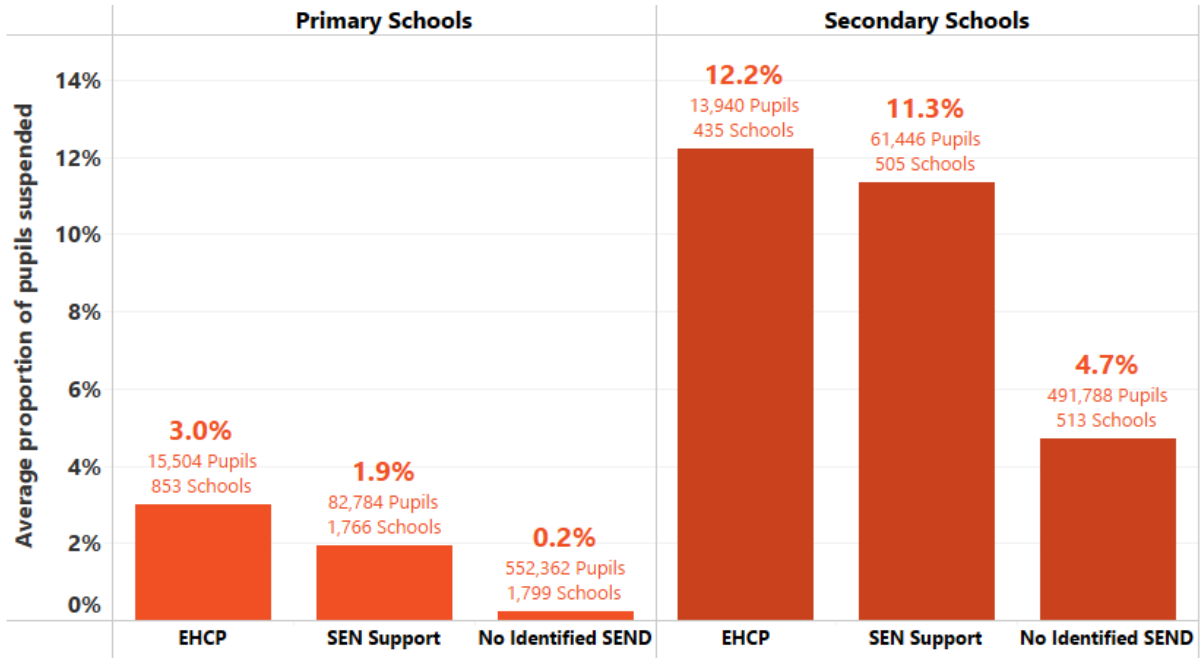
However, as is seen across England, pupils with SEND in London are several times more likely to be suspended than their peers without SEND. This is true across both primary and secondary schools. In fact, over a quarter of parents and carers surveyed (28%) in our research told us that their children with SEND had been suspended or permanently excluded from school.

Unlike with other outcomes explored in this research, in mainstream secondary schools there is not a particularly large gap between the suspension rates of young people with an EHCP and those with SEN Support, as shown in chart 9. This could be because the particular SEND primary need *type* is a more important factor for suspensions, than the *complexity* of need. For example, across England, the suspension rate among pupils with a primary SEND need of SEMH was more than three times that for those with any other primary SEND need in 2021/22.

Using NPD data on schools across London, we conducted statistical analysis and found that **the odds of a pupil with SEND being suspended are around 2.5 times higher than a pupil without SEND**, when controlling for specific school and pupil characteristics[50]. In our analysis, this was a greater risk factor than disadvantage, with the odds of a disadvantaged pupil being suspended around 2.3 times higher than their peers. In both cases, this was a statistically significant finding.

[50] School characteristics: academy, faith school, secondary, has a resource base or unit. Pupil characteristics: disadvantage, gender, EAL, ethnic background.

**Chart 9 – The average proportion of pupils suspended in London's mainstream schools (2021/22)**




Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research

We also explored the variation across different types of schools, focusing on mainstream secondary schools where exclusions are much more common than at primary[51]. We found that there are similarly substantial SEND gaps in the average percentage of pupils suspended across different types of secondary schools.

Comparing academies to local authority maintained schools, and faith schools to those with no faith status, reveals only small differences in the average rates of suspension. However, there is a substantial amount of variation *within* each school type. That is to say that, while there is clear inclusive practice to be found within all types of schools, the gaps in the experiences of pupils with SEND and their peers remain.

While there is some evidence of a lower proportion of pupils with EHCPs being suspended in schools with SEN units specifically, there is no clear evidence on the role of resourced provision in reducing suspensions of pupils with SEND. It is also possible that the lower rate of pupils with EHCPs suspended in London schools with SEN units is either a result of these pupils instead being moved into the unit, away from their peers and mainstream lessons, or partly a result of the particularly SEND needs that the units cater for.

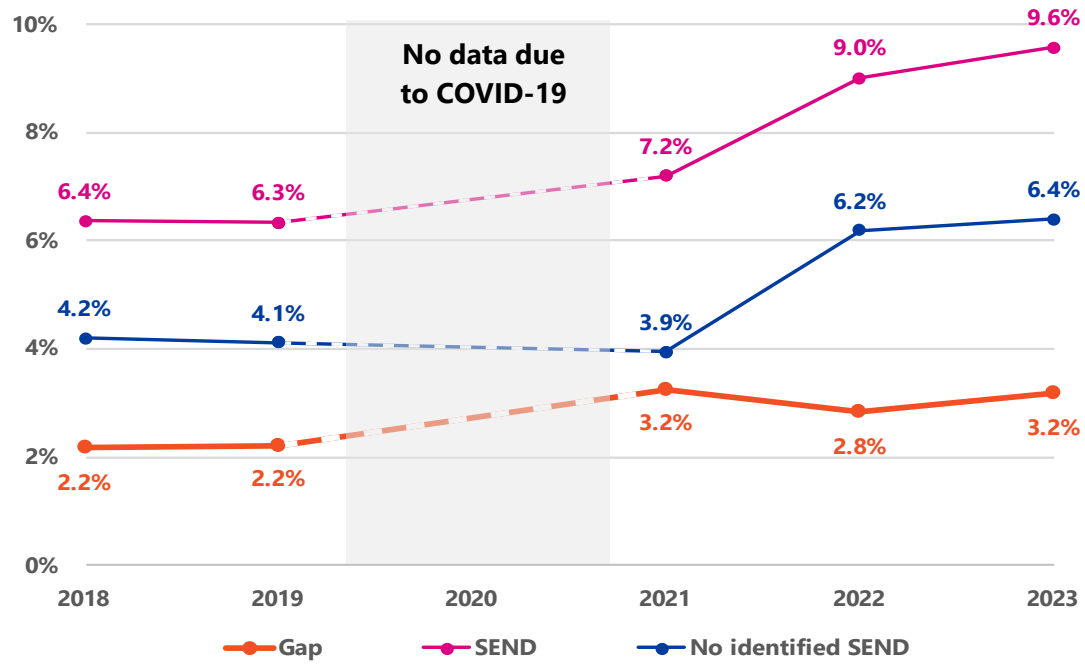
[51] Additionally, while permanent exclusion rates are higher for pupils with SEND than their peers, we focussed this more detailed analysis on suspensions as they much more commonly impact pupils with SEND and therefore allow us to more robustly identify patterns across school type and pupil demographics more clearly

## 4. Absence rates of pupils with SEND

**Key finding 4:** In London the odds of a pupil with SEND being persistently absent were around 1.8 times higher than a pupil without SEND.

A similar SEND gap is found in absenteeism in London schools. Across all school phases, pupils with SEND missed 9.6% of all sessions in 2022/23, 3.2% points more than their peers with no SEND, who missed just 6.4% of sessions. The growth in the gap between pupils with SEND and their peers since the COVID-19 pandemic is shown in chart 10.

**Chart 10 – Overall absence rates and gap between pupils with SEND and pupils with no identified SEND**



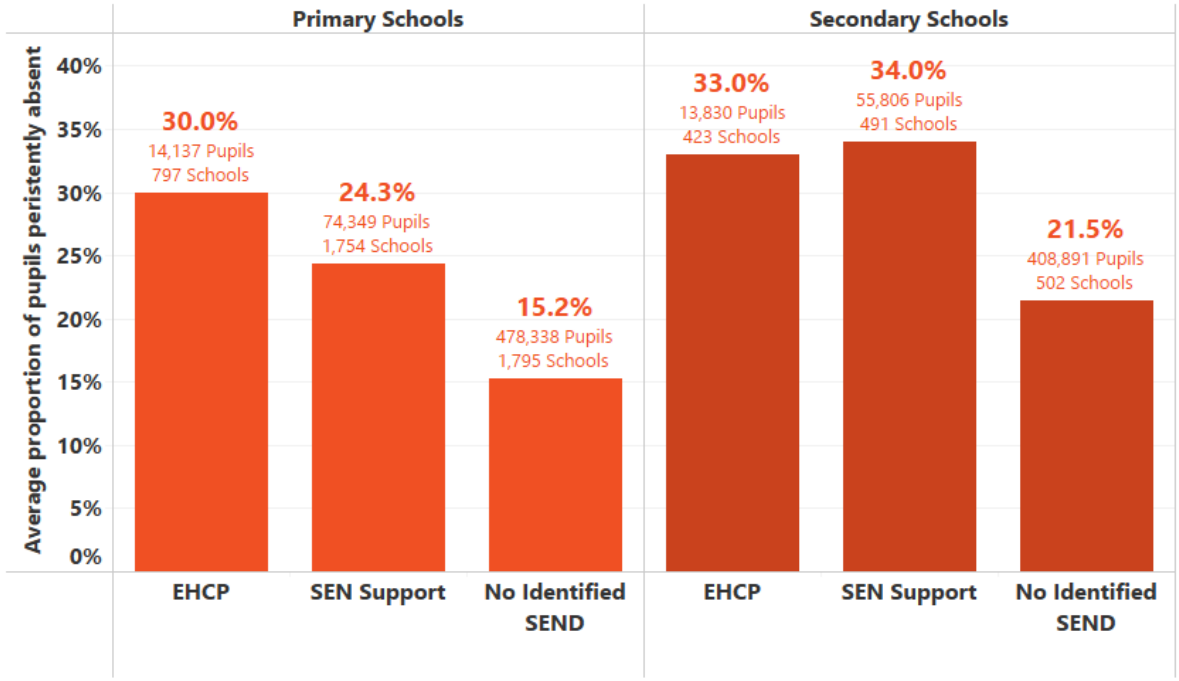

Concerningly, **pupils with SEND are also far more likely than their peers to be 'persistently' absent**. This is a DfE measure that refers to anyone who was absent for at least 10% of sessions. It is important to note that this *does* include sessions missed for *authorised* reasons, such as medical appointments, which are more common for pupils with SEND.

Like suspensions, persistent absenteeism is more common among pupils with SEND than their peers in both mainstream primary and secondary schools, and this is true for both pupils with EHCPs and those on SEN Support.

Once again, we conducted statistical analysis of NPD data and found that, in London, pupils with SEND were significantly more likely to be persistently absent compared to their peers without SEND. Controlling for school and pupil characteristics[52], **the odds of a pupil with SEND being persistently absent were around 1.8 times higher than a pupil without SEND**.

[52] School characteristics: academy, faith school, has a resource base or unit. Pupil characteristics: disadvantage, gender, EAL, ethnic background.

**Chart 11 – The average proportion of pupils persistently absent in London's mainstream schools (2022/23)**




Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research

As with suspensions, this SEND inclusion gap remains substantial across faith schools, academies and maintained schools, and those with or without SEN units or resourced provision.

The existence of clear inclusion gaps across all types of school across London suggests that there are systemic factors driving non-inclusive practice, such as the lack of availability of particular workforce skills and resources, or funding, rather than any specific issue with certain types of schools.

Pupils with SEND experiencing this reduction in their available learning time and other in-school opportunities presents a significant barrier to their inclusion. While it may not be possible to completely eliminate this gap in absence, as some pupils with SEND may have authorised absences related to their special educational need, reducing the gap should be a key priority.

## 5. Inclusion in the current Ofsted accountability framework

**Key finding 5**: The gap in **suspensions** rates between pupils with SEND and their peers is almost as large in *good* rated schools as it is in those rated r*equires improvement*

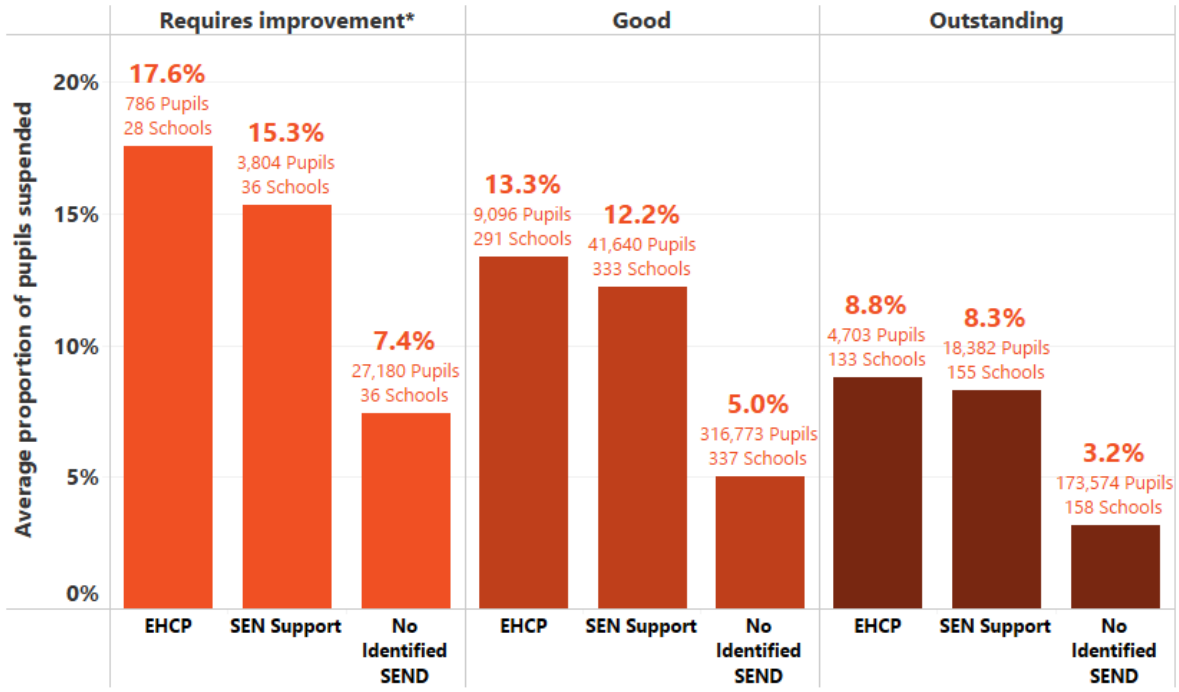
**Key finding 6:** The gap in **persistent absentee** rates between pupils with SEND and their peers is similar in *good* and *outstanding* schools to those rated r*equires improvement*

The gaps in suspension and persistent absentee rates between pupils with SEND and their peers are not clearly reflected by Ofsted judgements. These inclusion gaps remain in Ofsted rated *good* schools and in those rated as *requiring improvement*[53]. In fact, several of the mainstream

[53] Though there is some evidence of smaller gaps in *outstanding* schools

secondary schools in London with the highest rates of suspending pupils with SEND are rated *good* or *outstanding* by Ofsted. Strikingly, pupils with SEND in *outstanding* schools are more likely to have been suspended than pupils with no SEND in *requires improvement* schools.

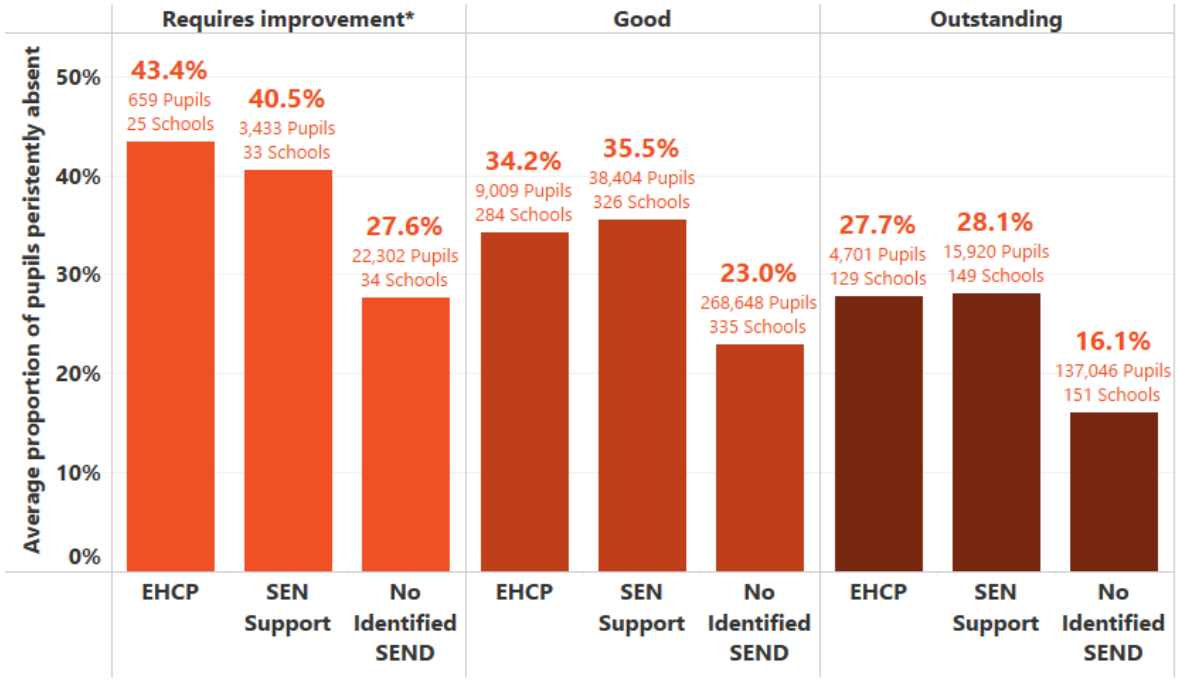
**Chart 12 – The average proportion of pupils suspended in London's mainstream secondary schools by Ofsted rating (2021/22)**




Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research
* The requires improvement category includes the small number of schools judged 'inadequate'

Furthermore, the gap in persistent absentee rates between pupils with SEND and their peers is similar in both *good* schools as in those rated as *requiring improvement*. However, unlike for suspensions, the average gap between pupils with SEND and their peers is almost as large in *outstanding* schools. This highlights a significant inclusion issue that does not appear to have been a determining consideration in Ofsted inspections to date.

**Chart 13 – The average proportion of pupils persistently absent in London's mainstream secondary schools by Ofsted rating (2022/23)**




Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research
* The requires improvement category includes the small number of schools judged 'inadequate'

While suspension and persistent absentee rates are not a perfect measure of inclusion, these findings may reflect the lack of an overt evaluation of inclusion of young people with SEND in Ofsted's current school inspection framework. Stakeholders reflected this view in interviews, explaining that they did not feel that efforts to be inclusive were rewarded by the accountability framework, with some even feeling that Ofsted, as well as school performance measures, can act as a real or perceived barrier to inclusion, or even as a driver of non-inclusive practice.

## 6. The effect of school and pupil demographics on inclusion

**Key finding 7:** Schools dealing with the highest level of economic disadvantage tend to suspend more of their pupils with SEND. The average suspension rate of pupils with SEND in the most deprived secondary schools is almost double that in the least deprived

**Key finding 8:** More than four in ten pupils with SEND were persistently absent in schools with the highest level of economic disadvantage

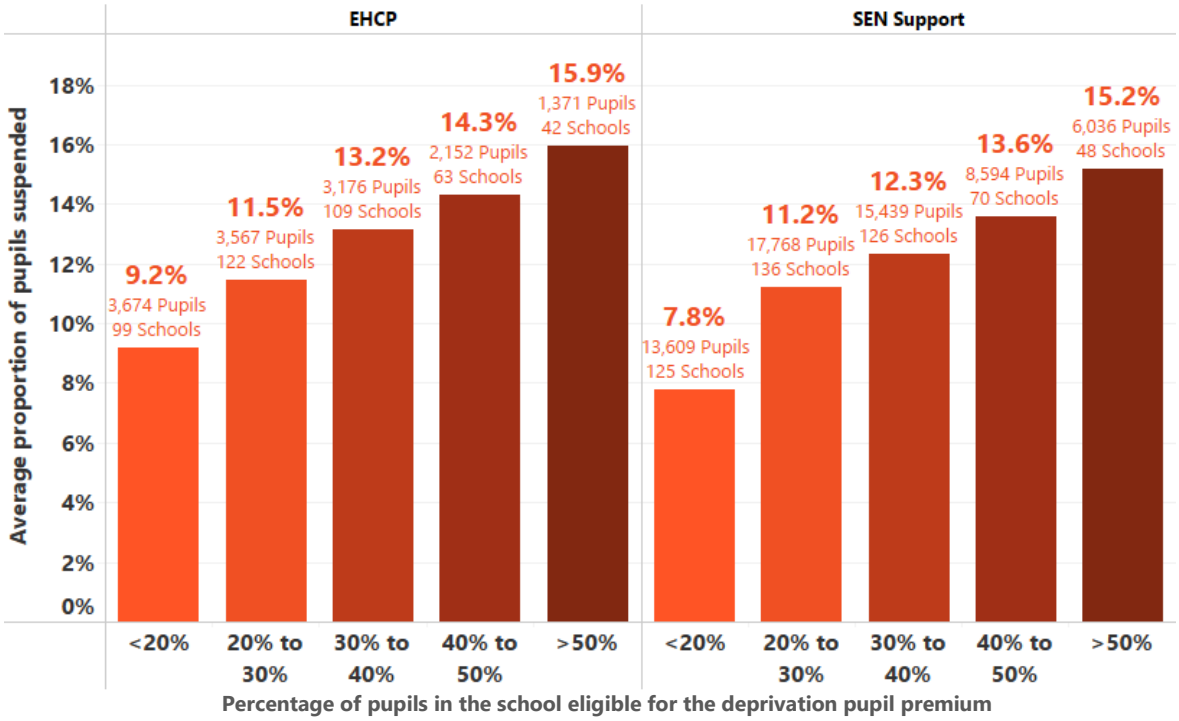
**Key finding 9:** Black secondary school pupils with SEND were found to be 1.5 times more likely to be suspended than their peers with SEND from other ethnic groups

While school type and Ofsted rating do not appear to be correlated with measures of inclusion, we found evidence that demographics do play a role both inside and outside London. In particular, there are much higher rates of pupils with SEND suspended in schools with higher levels of disadvantage. As shown in chart 14, schools with the highest proportion of pupils

eligible for the deprivation pupil premium[54] suspend the highest proportion of their SEND cohorts, on average. This suggests that schools in areas of deprivation, who are also more likely to be dealing with a wide variety of non-SEND related needs, are more likely to struggle to meet needs for children with SEND.

However, it is important to note that again there is large variation across schools within each group, with a very low proportion of pupils with SEND suspended in a large number of London schools in the most disadvantaged group. Similarly, several of the least disadvantaged schools in London were found to have suspended well over 20% of their pupils with SEND.

**Chart 14 – The average proportion of pupils suspended in London's mainstream secondary schools by deprivation pupil premium eligibility (2021/22)**

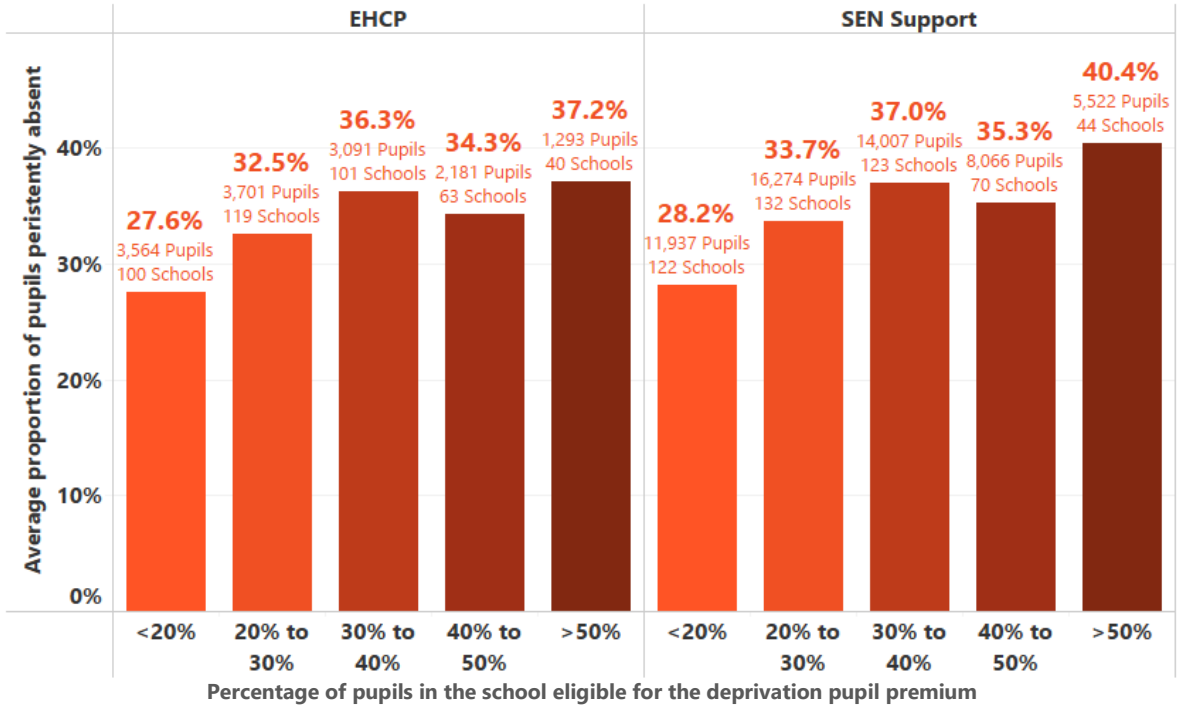



Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research

School demographics also appear to impact absence rates for pupils with SEND, suggesting deprivation plays a role in a school's ability to facilitate the attendance of their pupils with SEND. Importantly, this pattern is stronger in London than elsewhere. While persistent absence among pupils with SEND is a clear problem even in the least deprived schools, with over a quarter of both the EHCP and SEN Support cohorts persistently absent, it is a larger issue in the most deprived schools in London. In mainstream secondary schools with more than half of pupils eligible for the deprivation pupil premium, around four in 10 pupils with SEND were persistently absent, as shown in chart 15.

[54] Pupils are eligible for the deprivation pupil premium if they have been recorded as eligible for free school meals at any time over the last 6 years

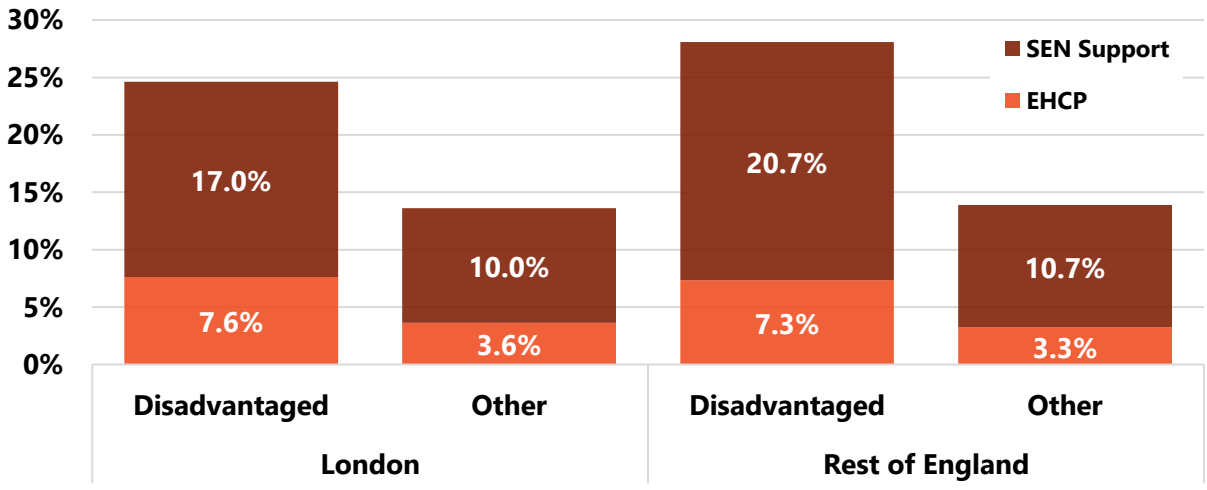
**Chart 15 – The average proportion of pupils persistently absent in London's mainstream secondary schools by deprivation pupil premium eligibility (2022/23)**




Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research

These findings are particularly concerning given that we know there is a large overlap between economic disadvantage and identification of SEND. In London, almost a quarter of disadvantaged pupils had either an EHCP or were on SEN Support, compared with under 15% of other pupils. Disadvantaged pupils with SEND were also found to be more likely than their peers to have their needs escalate to the point of requiring an EHCP. Almost a third of disadvantaged pupils with SEND had an EHCP in January 2023, compared with 26% of other pupils with SEND. This strengthens the case that there is an important correlation between deprivation and the inclusion of young people with SEND in London's schools.

**Chart 16 – The proportion of disadvantaged and other pupils with SEND (January 2023)**



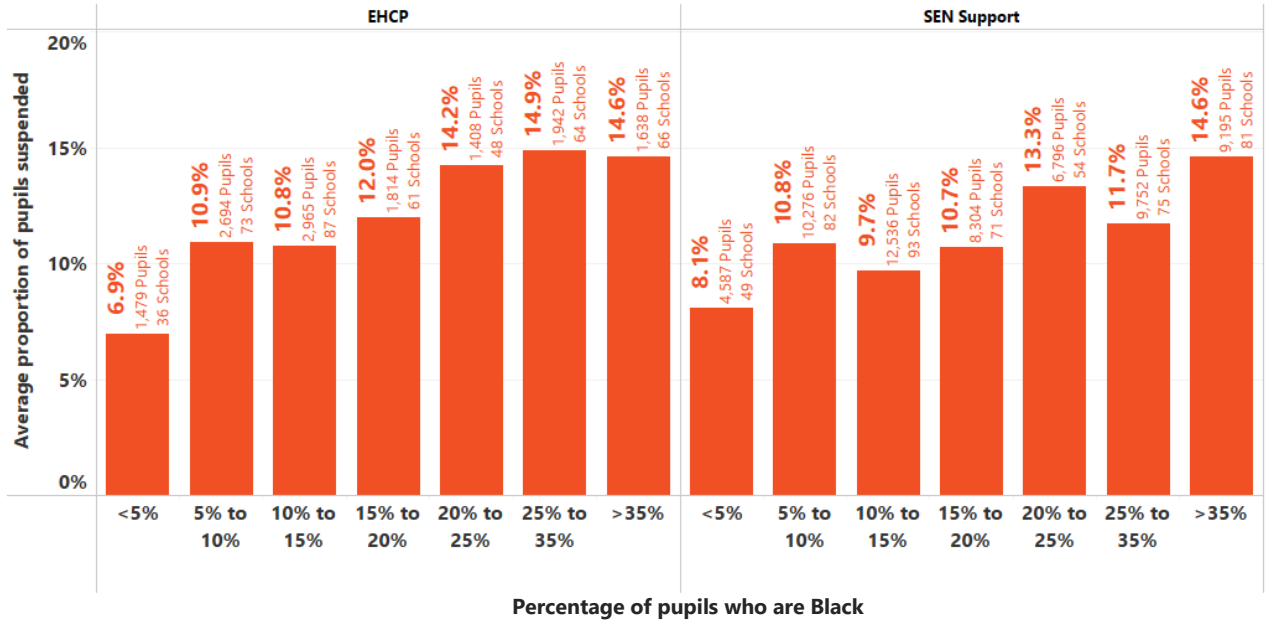

Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research

Our research also identified that Black pupils with SEND were more at risk of exclusion than their peers. In London, Black pupils with SEND were more likely to have been suspended than both other pupils with SEND who are not Black, and Black pupils with no identified SEND. In fact, **Black secondary school pupils with SEND were found to be 1.5 times more likely to be suspended than other pupils with SEND**, and more than twice as likely to have been suspended than Black pupils with no SEND, again when controlling for other characteristics[55]. Furthermore, this inequality actually appears *more* pronounced in London than across the rest of England.

At a school level, the differences are clear. Schools with the smallest cohorts of Black pupils, fewer than 5% of all pupils, suspended pupils with SEND at far lower rates than those with much larger Black cohorts. A similar pattern is found when looking at schools with larger Black African or Black Caribbean cohorts.

While further research is needed to identify the mechanisms and causes behind these observations, our findings suggest that ethnicity may play a role, alongside deprivation, in putting certain cohorts of pupils with SEND at more risk of non-inclusive practices like suspensions.

**Chart 17 – The average proportion of pupils suspended in London's mainstream secondary schools by the proportion of Black pupils (2021/22)**




Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research

[55] School characteristics: academy, faith school, has a resource base or unit. Pupil characteristics: disadvantage, gender, EAL, ethnic background.

## 7. Off-rolling: Pupils with SEND leaving their school

**Key finding 10:** In London, pupils with an EHCP are far more likely than their peers to leave their school at a non-standard time

**Key finding 11:** Pupils with EHCPs are less likely to leave their mainstream school placement at a non-standard time if the school has a SEN unit or resourced provision

Parents and carers of young people with SEND in London relayed experiences of being encouraged or pressured to remove their child from a mainstream school. This represents a form of 'off-rolling', defined by Ofsted as:

> *"the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without using a permanent exclusion, when the removal is primarily in the best interests of the school, rather than the best interests of the pupil. This includes pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school roll"*[56].

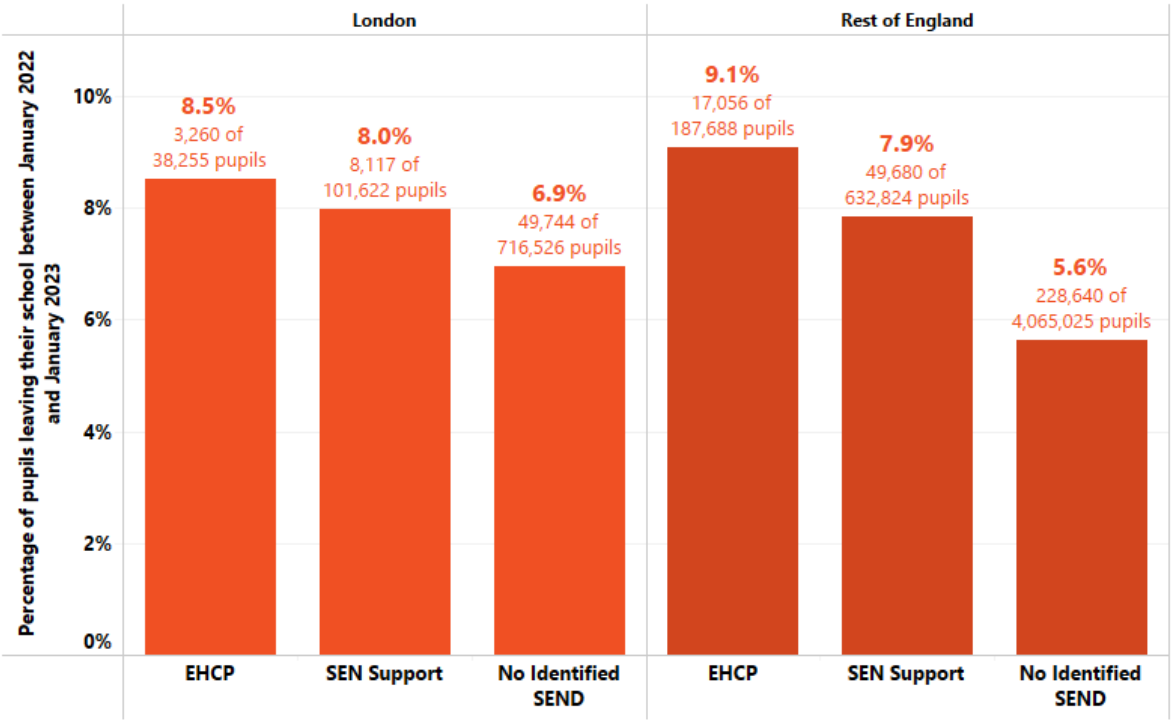
While it is much more difficult to reliably measure 'off-rolling' than suspensions or absence, the analysis below explores the rates of pupils in different schools and pupil groups leaving their school at non-standard points[57]. The data shows that pupils with SEND are much more likely to leave their current school outside of standard transition points than their peers, either as a result of 'off-rolling', permanent exclusion, or choosing to leave (including due to families relocating).

As shown in chart 18, 8.5% of pupils with EHCPs, and 8.0% of those with SEN Support, left their London school between January 2022 and January 2023 at a non-standard transition point. This represents more than one in every 13 pupils with SEND choosing to or being encouraged to leave their school in a single year. By comparison, in London, 6.9% of pupils with no identified SEND also left their school. If London's pupils with SEND had left at the same rate, that would have meant 620 more pupils with EHCPs and 1,105 more pupils on SEN Support staying in their school.

Our analysis confirmed that, after controlling for specific pupil and school characteristics[58], pupils with SEND were statistically significantly more likely to leave their school at a non-standard time.

[56] Ofsted (May 2019), What is off-rolling, and how does Ofsted look at it on inspection?
[57] To identify pupils leaving their schools at non-standard times only, those finishing nursery, year 2, year 6 and year 11 were removed. Pupils in alternative provision or PRUs were also excluded from this analysis.
[58] School characteristics: academy, faith school, has a resource base or unit. Pupil characteristics: disadvantage, gender, EAL, ethnic background.

**Chart 18 – The proportion of pupils leaving their mainstream school at a non-standard time between January 2022 and January 2023**



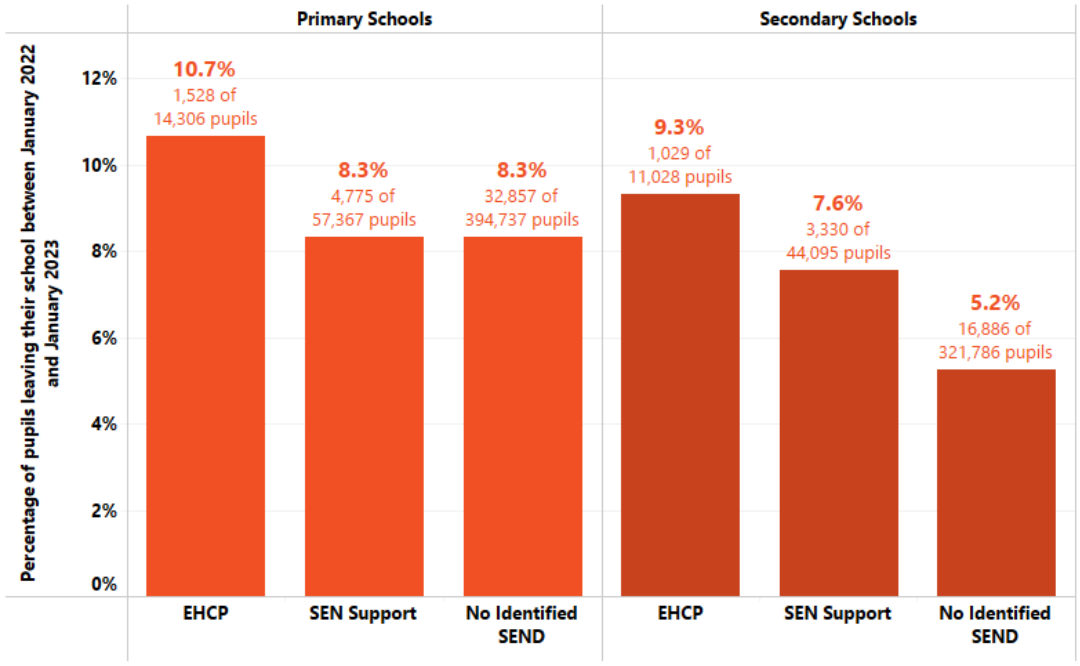

Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research

Looking at London schools by phase reveals some important patterns, as shown in chart 19. In mainstream primary schools, more than one in 10 pupils with EHCPs left their placement, while pupils with SEN Support left at the same rate as those with no identified SEND. While some of the higher rate in primary schools may be driven by the movement of families with younger children out of London, that does not explain the full picture as equivalent leaver rates are also high in primary schools outside London. In mainstream secondary schools, rates were lower for each group but there is still a substantial SEND gap.

Some of the pupils with SEND left their mainstream school to move to a special school. This could represent a choice made by a young person and their family, but could also be a result of a lack of inclusion in their mainstream school. Of the 1,528 pupils with EHCPs who left mainstream primary schools at non-standard times, around a third joined special schools. Of those with EHCPs leaving mainstream secondary schools, about a quarter went to a special school. A very small number of pupils with SEN Support also transitioned into special schools. Removing these moves from the analysis would, therefore, result in much smaller gaps between pupils with EHCPs and other pupils. However, we heard evidence from parents and carers that would suggest that such moves to special schools can be as a result of non-inclusive practice in mainstream schools, rather than necessarily a product of a more complex need being identified and a special school being more suitable.

Nevertheless, even if we make the assumption that *all* pupils leaving mainstream schools for special school placements are doing so for good, inclusive reasons, this still leaves thousands of pupils with SEND with unexplained school exits.

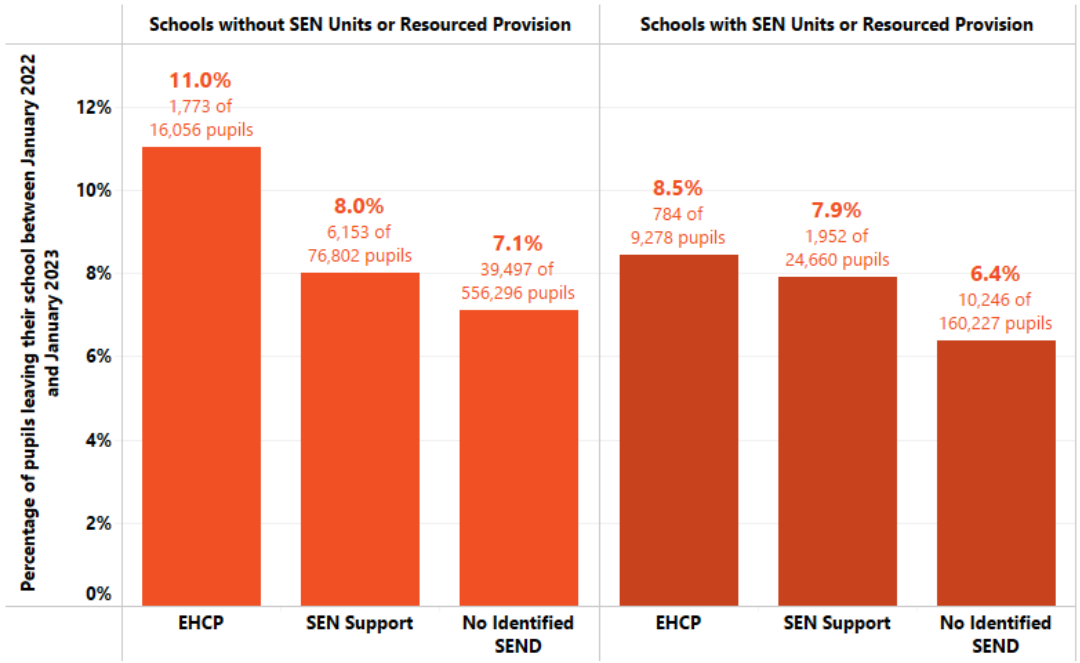
## Chart 19 – The proportion of London pupils leaving their school at a non-standard time between January 2022 and January 2023 by school phase




Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research

Looking at particular types of schools showed that school leaver rates for pupils with SEND were relatively similar in academies and local authority maintained schools. However, leaver rates for pupils with EHCPs were noticeably lower in schools with SEN units or resourced provision than in those without. This may reflect a feeling in those schools with some type of specialist provision that they are more able to meet the needs of, and therefore include, young people with more complex SEND needs.

## Chart 20 – The proportion of London pupils leaving their school at a non-standard time between January 2022 and January 2023 by school SEND provision




Source: Analysis of NPD data carried out as part of our research

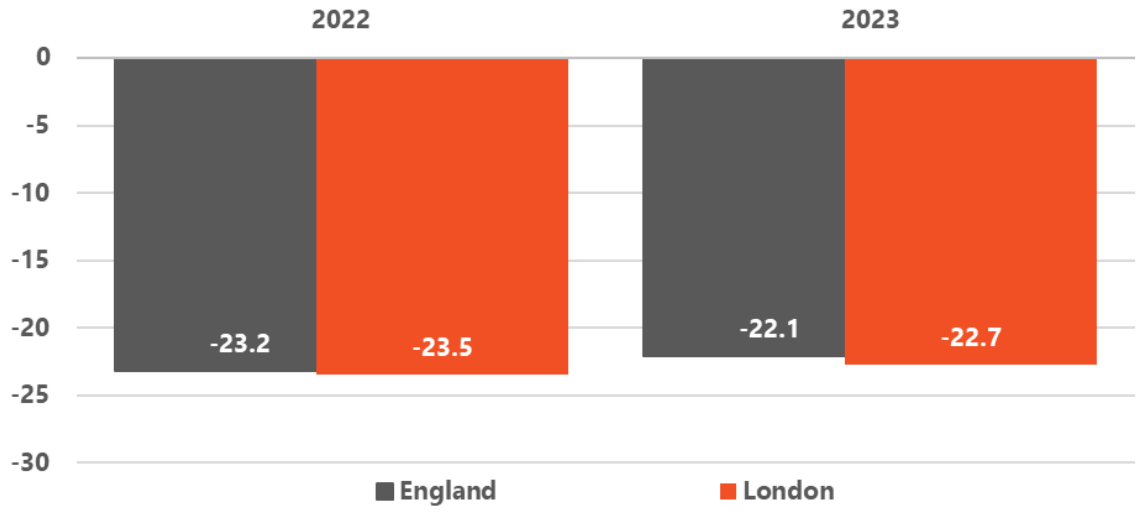
## 8. Attainment and progress gaps in London

**Key finding 12:** London has large and persistent outcomes gaps between young people with SEND and their peers, including in NEET rates

Measuring the attainment and progress of children and young people with SEND presents challenges as some will be working at a level that is below the expected level for pupils of their age. Traditional school accountability measures such as Attainment 8 and Progress 8 are limited in capturing the successes, and progress, made by pupils with SEND. Nonetheless, it is important that any gap in attainment and progress identified through these measures is minimised to ensure pupils with SEND are not excluded from further opportunities.

Stakeholders were clear that large numbers of pupils with SEND have the potential to make much stronger academic progress than they are being supported to do. For example, some parents consulted in this research referenced low expectations as an example of non-inclusive practice. There is also evidence that this problem is more pronounced in London. Looking at the most recent year of published Attainment 8 data, the headline measure of attainment for KS4 pupils, those with SEND have an average Attainment 8 score 22.7 points below the average across their peers with no SEND. This compares to a SEND gap of 22.1 points across England. Despite the SEND attainment gap slightly narrowing slightly from 2022, it remains large.

**Chart 21 – Attainment 8 gap between pupils with SEND and other pupils**

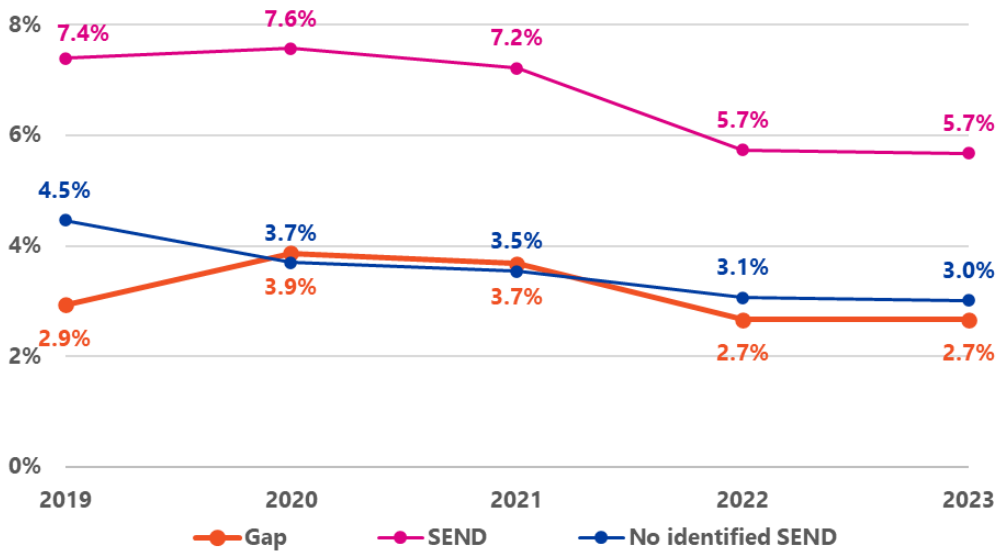



Source: DfE Key stage 4 performance publication (2023)

Furthermore, when examining Progress 8, the primary measure of the progress a pupil has made between the end of primary school and KS4, the gap between pupils with SEND and pupils without SEND is also larger in London than across England. In 2023, there was a 0.8 progress point gap, with London's SEND cohort having an average Progress 8 score of -0.4 and other pupils having an average score of +0.4. Focusing on narrowing the gap in attainment and progress between pupils with SEND and their peers should be a key focus of an inclusive education system, ensuring all students have equal opportunity to succeed academically.

Beyond academic attainment in school, a key goal of a pupil's education, including pupils with SEND, is preparation for adulthood and employment. However, in London in 2023, 5.7% of pupils with SEND were either not in education, employment or training (NEET) at the age of 16 or 17, or their destination was unknown. This rate is much higher than for pupils without SEND (3.0%). Furthermore, the gap in the proportion of pupils with SEND who moved onto education, employment or training following KS4 compared to pupils with no identified SEND increased in the latest year of published data. After KS5 in London, the gap between students with SEND and their peers in the proportion of students moving onto education, employment or training has also remained large.

**Chart 22 – Proportion of London pupils NEET or with an unknown destination**




Source: DfE Participation in education, training and NEET age 16 to 17 by local authority publication (2023)

## 9. Examples of inclusive practice across London

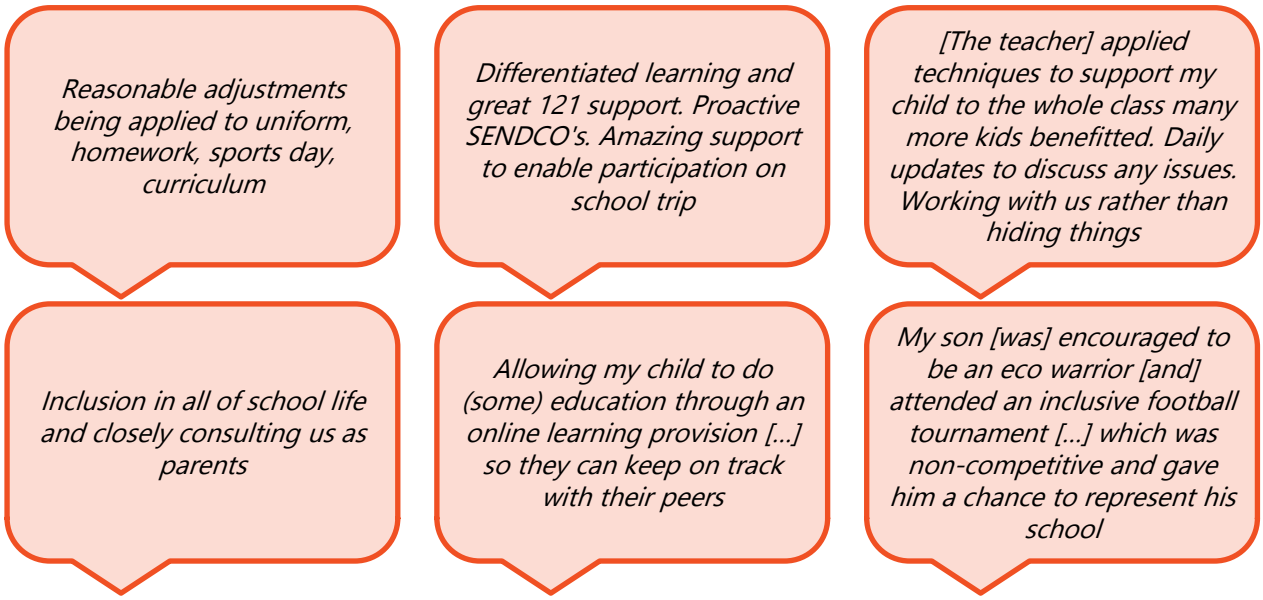
**Key finding 13:** Almost half of surveyed parents and carers were able to share examples of both particularly effective *and* ineffective inclusion, exemplifying the variation across London

**Key finding 14:** Pupils who were fully involved in decisions about their learning felt empowered and that they could rely on their teachers to know what helps them learn best

Parent and carer survey respondents were given the opportunity to share experiences of particularly effective inclusive practice. In total, 113 respondents (50.2%) shared positive experiences, a majority of whom had also shared examples of non-inclusive practice. Some of these answers are shown below.

Almost one in every three respondents expressed that a flexible approach to learning or the curriculum was key to inclusion. Other main themes which emerged from the answers suggest that supportive and understanding teachers and other school staff as well as an overall flexible school approach to school policies and practices were important aspects of effective inclusion.

**Figure 3 – Examples of specific experiences of inclusive practice**




Source: Parent and carer survey carried out as part of our research (2024)

In addition, the answers suggest that listening to and working with parents and carers is particularly important for effective inclusion.

Other answers included experiences of encouraged participation in extracurricular activities, effective one-to-one support, understanding of individual needs and teacher training.

Our visits to schools across London also highlighted examples of effective inclusive practice. In schools where there was the most visible focus on inclusion, pupils typically felt the most welcomed and included. This included teaching pupils across the school about diversity, equality in relation to disability, and special educational needs. Pupils in one school spoke positively about an autism week assembly and the fact that it was also covered in PSHE. In one school the strapline "acceptance without exception" was clearly visible across the school. Pupils knew what it meant and felt it informed how pupils treated each other.

> *The key is to build trust [with families], and to be transparent and flexible*
>
> Local authority stakeholder

Similarly, schools with effective communication – both within the school and between the school, pupils, parents/carers and families – and a systematic shared approach to inclusion tended to demonstrate more inclusive practices. For example, leaders and other teachers in one school visited spoke of the positive impact of the systematic 'triage' approach that had been established. where leaders of behaviour, safeguarding and SEND work together to consider referrals and agree, plan and review interventions. Pupils who had the strongest sense of being included were fully involved in decisions about their learning. They said they felt empowered and confident that they could rely on their teachers to know what helps them learn best.

# G. Recommendations

Our research has shown that there is widespread commitment to bring about a more inclusive school system, but stakeholders face significant funding, workforce and capacity challenges. Additionally there is limited agreement on what exactly inclusion of pupils with SEND should mean. This has led to localised approaches, with schools, academy trusts and local authorities each setting out their own principles for inclusion. However, stakeholders involved in our research shared a desire to see a common understanding and **mutual commitment to social and educational inclusion** across the education system that includes:

- **An excellent universal offer**, with high quality teaching of a broad curriculum. An excellent, broad, and widely accessible curriculum will ensure that schools and colleges meet the individual academic needs of their pupils. Embedding this as a universal expectation for schools and colleges means they can feel included and remain as present as possible in all aspects of school life, while enabling them to learn in the manner that is right for them.
- **Flexibility to meet individual needs**, including in approaches to timetabling, the curriculum, school policies, and choice of education setting.
- **A supportive culture and ethos**, valuing social as well as educational inclusion where schools work in partnership with families to understand needs and ensure young people with SEND feel welcomed.
- **Early and accurate identification** of needs without long delays. This should facilitate a "cradle-to-career" approach that addresses needs at every stage, and values long term outcomes.

To bring about this vision, and overcome the challenges identified in this research, a range of actions should be taken by government, Ofsted, local authorities, MATs, schools and colleges. These encompass workforce development, accountability, funding, and partnership working.

## 1: A sufficient and well-supported workforce

This research has shown the importance of the school and local authority workforce in ensuring an inclusive environment. At the moment, inclusion can feel like a "lottery", depending on families coming into contact with well-trained experts, with the time, ability and resources to provide the required support. We have also identified challenges in London in the availability of school support staff and SEND specialists.

Stakeholders were clear that, in schools, inclusion should not just be the role of the SENDCO, but that it also relies on the understanding, expertise and commitment of senior leaders, teachers and support staff. As such, we recommend that:

- **The DfE should work to bring about a further professionalisation of the teaching assistant role, with clear pathways for progression**. This should include formal training opportunities, clear expectations for performance management, and appropriate remuneration. This will empower teaching assistants to more effectively support teachers and school leaders in ensuring inclusive educational experiences for young people with SEND.

- **Providers of initial and continued teacher training should ensure a consistent and overt focus on inclusion across the curriculum**. School leaders should also ensure inclusion is a topic for INSET days, in a similar way to safeguarding.
- **Initial teacher training** (ITT) **providers should also ensure** that trainee teachers are able to, and encouraged to, take **placements in inclusive schools, including special schools**.
- **The DfE** should explore the **establishment of an enhanced SEND or SEND specialist career path** to ensure schools have access to teachers with the skills needed to meet the full range of pupil needs. This would progress teachers from ITT through to senior roles with a clear and defined pathway to develop knowledge and skills to support inclusion of young people with SEND in their school.
- **London schools, local authorities and MATs** should do more to **enable a greater degree of movement of qualified teachers between mainstream and special schools**. This would support teachers to gain a range of experience with young people with SEND, and bring skills learnt in specialist environments back into mainstream schools, and vice versa.
- **The government** should ensure that there is **a sufficient workforce of SEND experts** available to schools, MATs and local authorities, including educational psychologists and speech and language therapists, who are well-trained and have a good understanding of inclusion. This should be informed by robust forecasting of future needs so that priorities can be set about which skills are most needed, and where. This must include plans to train sufficient numbers of new specialists to keep up with the rising numbers of pupils with SEND.
- **School and MAT leaders should ensure that responsibility for inclusion sits with senior leaders**, including the SENDCO. SENDCOs and other school leaders should cultivate an inclusive culture and ethos in the school and ensure that staff are aware of the latest evidence on inclusive practice. This could include keeping colleagues up to date with evidence from the *What Works in SEND programme*[59], as well as supporting them to embed best practice into their day-to-day work.

  Some MATs have already adopted more creative models, such as 'super-SENDCOs' with responsibility across multiple schools. Such an approach should be researched further and rolled out more widely if successful.

## 2: An accountability framework that values and encourages inclusion

Accountability matters, and local authorities, schools and colleges should be recognised for efforts to improve inclusion. We found a widespread feeling, and data to support this, which suggests that the existing accountability framework does not prioritise inclusion.

The accountability framework includes a wide range of incentives, dis-incentives, and levers that can be adapted to better encourage inclusion and discourage non-inclusive practice, including:

- **Ofsted** should produce **clear guidance on inclusion and ensure that the new inspection criterion on inclusion is valued on an equal footing with safeguarding and academic performance**. While Ofsted will have to develop their own explanation of

[59] What Works in SEND

what inclusion in schools should constitute and how it can be evaluated, this should be in-line with the definition of inclusion in this report.

- **Ofsted** should ensure that the **new report cards include data on inclusion,** such as suspension and persistent absentee rates of pupils with SEND, as well as off-rolling (which may require work to agree a measurable technical definition). Ofsted should also consider how to include qualitative data on the extent to which a school has an inclusive culture and ethos.
- **Ofsted** should ensure that **the views of young people with SEND and their parents and carers are proactively sought in their upcoming consultations**, and therefore that the changes made to the inspection framework and the introduction of report cards address their concerns.
- **The DfE** should **review the role of school and college performance measures in narrowing the curriculum for young people with SEND**. The government's new curriculum and assessment review should have inclusion at its heart. In particular, the DfE should examine the role of the English Baccalaureate in narrowing options and discouraging a broad curriculum which can be accessed by the vast majority of pupils at Key Stage 4, including those with SEND. Progress 8 should also be reviewed, to understand how it may be adapted to better account for the progress made by pupils with SEND[60].
- **The DfE** should **evaluate the impact of scrutiny on absence rates on young people with SEND**. This could include the consideration of a new absence code that allows schools to record that a pupil with SEND was absent or late due to circumstances specifically related to their SEND.
- **Schools and MATs** should be supported to **adopt more flexible approaches to attendance policies for pupils with SEND**. This could include learning from successes with flexible arrangements during the pandemic and working in partnership with virtual school heads[61].
- **The DfE** should **publish measures of long-term outcomes for pupils with SEND** by school and local authority. Reporting outcomes into early adulthood, including on employment rates, will recognise the long-term benefits from inclusive practice and therefore reward schools and colleges that prioritise inclusion. This data will also facilitate the identification of best practice, and demonstrate the value for money from investment in inclusion. The DfE should also explore the use of more holistic measures in these long-term outcome measures, such as the ONS' four personal wellbeing questions[62].

## 3: Sufficient and responsive funding

Improving inclusion in London's schools will require additional investment, and stakeholders were clear that current funding was inadequate to meet current need. While many of our recommendations do not necessarily require additional expenditure, participants in our research were clear that some aspects of inclusion will require additional or redirected funding. There were

[60] Schools Week (2019), Progress 8 fails pupils with special needs
[61] Virtual school heads have responsibility for ensuring children looked after by the local authority are engaged in learning and achieving good outcomes
[62] ONS (2018), Surveys using our four personal well-being questions

many examples uncovered in our research where a lack of funding, or stringent controls on different types of spending, had worked to prevent inclusion. We therefore recommend that:

- **The DfE** must ensure that **local authorities and schools have sufficient sustainable funding to support effective inclusion** of the growing cohort of young people with SEND. More funding would help to ensure the supply of sufficient specialist support for schools and families, reduce waiting lists, and ensure that decisions can be made with inclusion, rather than budgets, as their driving factor. In particular, adequate funding must be made available to support cohorts that appear most impacted by non-inclusive practice, such as those in particularly deprived areas, or with large numbers of Black pupils with SEND.
- **Local authorities and the DfE** must ensure that **funding is responsive to needs early, as they arise**. Several stakeholders told us how a lack of funding to address needs earlier led to escalation and trauma. As outlined in the case study from Camden Council, de-coupling funding from the more bureaucratic, medicalised, and lengthy process of issuing an EHCP can allow young people's needs to be addressed earlier, and in many cases, may prevent escalation.

## 4: Effective partnership working across London

While we found that the London's unique context presents challenges, for example a large diversity of need and areas with very high levels of deprivation, it also provides unique opportunities for stronger collaboration and more effective partnership working. We also found a large degree of movement of pupils with SEND between local authority areas. Additionally, at a school and nursery level, we found many examples where better information sharing across London's providers would have supported inclusion.

We have identified five areas in which better partnership working and more effective collaborative working can support better inclusion of young people with SEND in London's schools:

- **London's local authorities, MATs and schools** should **strengthen and expand the involvement of young people with SEND and their families in strategic decision making**, as well as decisions about their individual cases.

  While the specific format of this may vary, London's network of parent carer forums offers a starting point for organisations looking to include families in their decision making. Strategic decision making processes should ensure that families' voices are heard and influence the prioritisation of limited resources to best meet the needs of young people with SEND. The perspectives of those from groups at most risk of non-inclusive practice, including disadvantaged and Black pupils, should be actively sought.
- **The DfE** should **ensure London's local authorities are empowered to work together to make decisions around investment in future educational provision**. Investment decisions should be made collaboratively and informed by a clear shared understanding of, and vision for, inclusion. This collaborative working around investment in provision should include:
  - Strategic engagement with London's parent carer forums
  - Cooperation between neighbouring local authorities to ensure plans are complementary and not duplicative
  - Alignment with the DfE's plans through the regional director for London

- London's **local authority** education and social care teams, alongside relevant **NHS** bodies, should **expand and strengthen collaboration on joint commissioning** of a range of services for young people with SEND. This should encompass the procurement of a wide range of services, including educational psychologists and therapeutic services like speech and language therapists. This should be informed by pan-London intelligence on likely future needs.
- **London's local authorities** should **establish more effective mechanisms for sharing data on early years pupils** in order to facilitate more effective early and accurate identification. Data sharing should be established between state-funded and private nurseries, health care providers and social care teams. This should include information on young people's education, health and care needs as well as any existing support plans in place (even if this is not formalised in an EHCP).
- **London's local authorities and schools** should **establish clear mechanisms to encourage the sharing of good practice across London**. While the exact format of this could vary across London, and should build on existing efforts, this could include:
    - Making use of existing sub-regional groups within London to share good practice through specific inclusion-themed sessions. Local authorities should use these to share success stories, such as those outlined in case studies in this report
    - Schools in different areas supporting reciprocal secondments, for example a special school teacher spending time in a mainstream school and vice versa
    - Making use of existing school groupings within many local authority areas, such as school clusters, to share best practice and evidence-based research about effective pedagogical approaches to inclusion
    - Building on successful examples, including of effective partnerships between special and mainstream schools.

# Conclusion

This research has explored inclusion of young people with SEND in London's schools. We first aimed to improve the understanding of, including defining, inclusion. Through this research, we developed the following definition of inclusion:

> **Identifying and supporting the full range of needs through flexible provision, including a broad universal offer, with an emphasis on welcoming all young people and creating a feeling of belonging across the school community**.

We then explored both existing evidence and new data to understand the nature and scale of non-inclusive practice in London, identify successful ways of addressing this non-inclusive practice and promoting inclusive practice, and ultimately make recommendations for policy and practice to improve inclusion.

We adopted a mixed-methods research approach, collecting and analysing data from three distinct sources; existing evidence including from academic journals, local authorities and Ofsted; qualitative data collection including from the young people with SEND and their families; and quantitative data analysis, making use of both publicly available data and the NPD.

It is clear that London faces several key challenges, which present barriers to the effective inclusion of children and young people with SEND within their schools. These include a rapidly growing SEND cohort, seriously stretched funding, an insufficient workforce, and increasing gaps in outcomes between pupils with SEND and their peers.

Our research has shown that there is a mixed picture of inclusion across London, with almost as many parents and carers of young people with SEND able to describe particularly effective inclusion as could describe experiences of non-inclusive practice. Furthermore, we found that pupils with SEND across all types of school have tended to experience higher rates of suspensions, persistent absenteeism and are more likely to leave their school at non-standard times. This prevents children and young people with SEND from experiencing the full benefits of an inclusive education, which are likely to include both individual and familial emotional benefits, stronger academic and behavioural outcomes, as well as wider social benefits.

In order to improve the inclusion of young people with SEND within schools, there must now be a common understanding and a shared commitment to a vision of social and educational inclusion across London's education system. In practice, this means a commitment to the provision of an excellent universal offer, the flexibility to meet individual needs, a culture and ethos which values social as well as educational inclusion, and early and accurate identification of needs. To achieve this, we have recommended several specific actions, to be taken by the government, Ofsted, local authorities, MATs, schools and colleges, across four key themes; workforce, accountability, funding, and pan-London partnership working.

We are calling on stakeholders across the sector to take these recommendations forward and work together with the clear common goal of ensuring that London's schools are an inclusive place for young people with SEND.

## About London Councils and Mime

**London Councils** is the collective body of London's 32 boroughs and the City of London Corporation. As a cross-party and pan-London collective organisation, London Councils has an important role to play in fostering cooperation between local authorities, co-ordinating joint work, and lobbying to influence policy and shape legislation for the collective interest of London local government. They work across several key themes, including 'children, young people and education'.

**Mime** is a mission-led organisation, based in London, who specialise in education data analysis and research, with a particular focus on SEND and inclusion. Mime has over 15 years of experience working closely with London local government on education research, analysis and strategy.

The research team for this project included several members of the Mime team and two SEND specialists working on this project as associates, who both have over 20 years of experience with SEND and inclusion.

For the last six years, Mime has been working on how to better define, measure and improve inclusion of young people with SEND. In 2019 the Mime Inclusion Index launched[63]. This brought together a range of public data to better understand inclusion across each local authority area. This analysis revealed that based on public data alone, London local authority areas tended to demonstrate better inclusion than other parts of the country.

## Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without a very large number of stakeholders, who shared their perspectives, their data, and their ideas. This included:

- London Councils
- London local authorities
- Young people with SEND across seven schools
- Teachers and senior leaders in eight schools
- The National Network of Parent Carer Forums, London region
- The Department for Education
- Ofsted
- The Office for National Statistics
- A teaching union
- Our partners and colleagues with expertise in SEND and inclusion

Throughout the report we have drawn on the evidence provided across this wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the findings are accurate and the recommendations are useful and implementable.

This work contains statistical data from ONS which is Crown Copyright. The use of the ONS statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the ONS in relation to the

[63] Mime (2019) Inclusion Index

interpretation or analysis of the statistical data. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

The analysis was carried out in the Secure Research Service, part of the Office for National Statistics.

# Appendix 1: Glossary of key terms

- **ARP** – Additionally Resourced Provision
- **ASD** – Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- **AP** – Alternative Provision. This is educational provision arranged by a local authority for pupils not able to attend mainstream schools
- **C&I** – Communication and Interaction. This covers the SEND primary needs of ASD and SLCN
- **C&L** – Cognition and Learning. This covers the SEND primary needs of SpLD, MLD, SLD, and PMLD
- **CPD** – Continuing Professional Development
- **DfE** – Department for Education
- **EAL** – English as an Additional Language. This means young people who do not have English as their first language. The DfE has defined first language as 'the language to which a child was initially exposed during early development and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or in the community'
- **EBSA** – Emotionally Based School Avoidance. Describes pupils with very low attendance due to emotional factors, such as anxiety, making it difficult for them to attend school or college
- **EHCP** – Education, Health and Care Plan. This is a legal document issued by a local authority to a young person between 0 and 25 years old with complex special educational needs or disabilities. It outlines their educational, health and social care needs, including their specific education placement
- **Expulsion** – Also known as a 'permanent exclusion'. This is when a pupil is excluded from their school indefinitely
- **FSM** – Free School Meals. School pupils from families that meet specific economic criteria are eligible to receive free school meals. This is therefore used as a measure to identify pupils from low-income households
- **Full Level 2** – Achieving a grade 4 or above in at least five GCSEs or equivalent
- **GLA** – Greater London Authority
- **HI** – Hearing Impairment
- **ITT** – Initial Teacher Training
- **KS3** – Key Stage 3. The covers school years 7 to 9 where pupils are aged 11 to 14
- **KS4** – Key Stage 4. The covers school years 10 and 11 where pupils are aged 14 to 16
- **KS5** – Key Stage 5. The covers school years 12 and above where pupils are 16 or older
- **LSA** – Learning Support Assistant. Usually assigned to work with one specific pupil
- **MAT** – Multi Academy Trust
- **MLD** – Moderate Learning Difficulty
- **MSI** – Multi-Sensory Impairment
- **NEET** – Not in Education, Employment or Training

- **NPD** – National Pupil Database. A secure access only dataset with detailed person-level data on all pupils who attend state-funded schools in England
- **PD** – Physical Disability
- **PMLD** – Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty
- **PRU** – Pupil Referral Unit. This is provision for children who are deemed not able to attend school, for example because they have an illness or have been excluded
- **Resourced provision** – Where places in a mainstream school are reserved for pupils with a specific type of SEND need. Pupils are taught mainly in mainstream classes, but require some specialist facilities around the school
- **SEMH** – Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- **SEN unit** – Special provisions in mainstream schools where pupils with SEND are taught mainly in separate classes
- **SEND** – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- **SENDCO** – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator
- **Sensory and/or physical needs** – This covers the SEND primary needs of HI, PD, VI and MSI
- **SLCN** – Speech, Language and Communication Needs
- **SLD** – Severe Learning Difficulty
- **SpLD** – Specific Learning Difficulty
- **Suspension** – Previously known as 'fixed period exclusions', these refer to a pupil being excluded from school for a set period of time
- **VI** – Visual Impairment

# Appendix 2: Full research method

This section presents a more detailed outline of our research method than is covered in Section B of the report.

## 1. Research aims

The aims of this research are distinct from previous research on SEND in England in two key ways. Firstly, this research focuses specifically on inclusion, meaning while the report touches on other key issues within SEND, for example the legislative framework, the analysis and recommendations are primarily aimed at understanding and improving inclusion of young people with SEND. Secondly, the research is aimed at addressing inclusion in London. While many of the issues discussed, and some of the recommendations made, will be relevant across England, everything is framed around the London context. This allows for more directly useful analysis, and more targeted recommendations. In addition, the stakeholders involved in this research are in a position to directly address many of the recommendations.

More generally, this research project set out with the following research aims:

1. **Improve understanding** of inclusion in London's schools, including the specific drivers and groups that are affected the most, and the benefits of inclusive practice
2. **Measure** the scale of non-inclusive practice such as exclusions and off-rolling
3. **Identify** successful ways to address non-inclusive practice and promote inclusion
4. **Influence** practice, policy and legislation to ensure that local authorities can fulfil a role that ensures all state-funded schools more inclusive

To address these, a series of more detailed research questions were defined (see below).

## 2. Research questions

Building on London Councils' initial research aims, research questions were agreed and refined during the first stage of this research project. These questions cover four distinct areas:

**A. What is inclusion?**

- **A1:** What do teachers, SEND practitioners, local authorities, NGOs/charities, young people with SEND and their families understand by the term "inclusive practice" and what are some examples?
- **A2:** What are the key characteristics of an "inclusive" school (including mainstream, bases/units and special), and how does that relate to the volume and earliness of SEND identification?
- **A3:** How much do local authority stakeholders, NGOs/charities, pupil and parent views on the benefits of different types of provision, such as resource bases or special schools, differ? Does this vary based on SEND need type and complexity?
- **A4:** What are the most common types of non-inclusive practice that young people with SEND experience in their schools? Does this include off-rolling, overreliance on teaching assistants, part-time timetables, flawed streaming by 'ability', exclusions, or separate classes?

- **A5:** To what extent does financial cost factor into decision making and what are the resource implications for local authorities and schools of inclusive/non-inclusive practices?
- **A6:** What other mechanisms, either overt or tacit (e.g. dissuasion), do schools use to exclude pupils with SEND?

**B. What are the benefits of inclusive practice?**

- **B1:** What do teachers, education researchers, local authorities, and parents (including those of children with no SEND) see as the impact of inclusive practice?
- **B2:** How do outcomes (including attainment, absence, destinations, health, happiness, and other social/emotional outcomes) for pupils with SEND in "inclusive" schools compare to those that attended less inclusive schools?
- **B3:** How do outcomes for pupils with no identified SEND in "inclusive" schools compare to those that attended less inclusive schools? Does the type of SEND specialism impact this?

**C. How widespread is non-inclusive practice and who is most impacted?**

- **C1:** How common is it for London pupils with SEND to be excluded, or to leave their school at non-standard point in the year (suggesting off-rolling)?
- **C2:** To what extent do different types of schools (including selective schools, faith schools and academies) in London reflect the socioeconomic and ethnic makeup of their local area and neighbouring schools? Does this correlate with other measures of inclusion?
- **C3:** What are the wider personal, social and economic impacts of non-inclusive practice on young people with SEND and their families?
- **C4:** How do outcomes and school movement of pupils with SEND in London schools compare to those in other parts of the country?
- **C5:** How have rates and frequency of pupils with SEND being excluded or leaving their school at a non-standard time changed in London, particularly compared to before the pandemic? Does this trend vary by primary need?
- **C6:** What is the impact of leaving a school at a non-standard time on pupils with SEND, including on their attainment, progress and absence rates?

**D. How can inclusion in London's schools be improved?**

- **D1:** What has driven/motivated/incentivised schools and local authorities to be inclusive?
- **D2:** What external or internal barriers and disincentives (real or perceived) do local authorities, schools, and particularly SENDCOs, face when trying to be more inclusive?
- **D3:** What support do schools, and particularly SENDCOs, need to improve inclusion in their schools?
- **D4:** What interventions could national government, local authorities, London Councils, and MAT/school leaders make to bring about better inclusion?

## 3. Evidence review

The starting point for this research was to explore the existing literature. In total, the research team reviewed around 40 pieces of existing literature, several of which were meta-studies, which presented evidence from dozens of previous research projects. The literature reviewed was from a range of sources, including:

- Academic journals
- Local authorities

- Other local and regional government bodies
- National government
- Ofsted
- Charities and NGOs
- MATs
- Schools

We also reviewed dozens of recent news articles around SEND and inclusion. This literature helped to further direct our own qualitative and quantitative data collection, as well as begin to answer some of the research questions.

## 4. Qualitative data collection

It was important for this research itself to follow an inclusive approach. This meant ensuring a wide range of voices were heard and considered in the findings and recommendations. Most importantly, the qualitative data collection allowed us to consider the opinions, experiences and ideas of young people with SEND, who have the most important stake in improving inclusion.

### School visits

Schools across London were longlisted for engagement following analysis of a range of data, including on SEND incidence and deprivation. We then engaged with stakeholders from the local authority or school improvement partnership to narrow down to a shortlist of schools recognised locally as having particularly effective practice in inclusion. We visited seven secondary schools and one special school, and held a further virtual 'visit' with one local autism outreach service. The final list included schools with a wide range of characteristics:

- SEND incidence ranged from around 15% to 30% of pupils
- School rolls ranged from a few hundred to almost 2,000
- Deprivation levels ranged from 20% to over half of pupils eligible for free school meals
- Two faith schools
- Included both good and outstanding Ofsted rated schools
- Schools in both Inner and Outer London

The school visits involved focus groups and interviews with pupils with SEND, teachers and support staff, and school leaders.

### Children and young people with SEND

Through the seven school visits, we held focus groups with dozens of young people with SEND. This included young people in KS3, KS4 and post-16 where the schools had sixth forms. These discussions with young people with SEND aimed to understand their views, experiences and gather examples on the following topics:

- What they consider to be "inclusive practice" and its benefits
- Have they experienced non-inclusive practice and what was the impact on them
- How their experience varied across different types of schools
- What barriers they faced in being included within mainstream schools

These focus groups were held in schools, with participants recommended by the schools themselves. Our researcher ensured informed consent was given, and pupils were supported by advocates where school leaders and pupils deemed this appropriate.

### SENDCOs and other school leaders

During the school visits, interviews were held with SENDCOs and other school leaders. These aimed to understand the strategic approach to inclusion across the school, as well as identify the key barriers to better inclusion.

### Other teachers and wider school staff

As well as discussions with leaders in each school, we engaged with other teachers, including early career teachers[64], and support staff. This helped us to understand how well understood and implemented the overall approach to inclusion was across the school. These interviews also helped to identify barriers and opportunities for inclusion.

### Parents and carers of children and young people with SEND

A key group of stakeholders are the families of young people with SEND. We worked with the London regional group from the National Network of Parent Carer Forums to hold four online focus groups, gaining the perspective of over 30 parents and carers. Two of the focus groups were more generally focused on the understanding of inclusion and sharing experiences of effective or ineffective inclusion. The second two focus groups were themed, with one group for parents and carers of pre-school age children with SEND, and the other for those with experience of young people being educated outside of school.

While we were able to include a large number of parents and carers in the discussions across the four focus groups, we also conducted an online survey, which was completed by more than 200 parents and carers. This allowed us to crosscheck findings and ensure that experiences discussed in the focus groups were representative of a common theme.

It should be noted that the sampling here is not random, and previous studies have found participation biases in research on inclusion in schools[65]. We only directly collected data from those parents and carers who were engaged with London's parent carer forums. It is possible that this group are more likely to have had particularly positive or negative experiences than a random sample of parents and carers of young people with SEND. While this potential bias was considered, it is also important to understand these experiences as an inclusive system means considering the needs of everyone.

### Local authority staff and stakeholders

We also engaged with a cross-section of local authority stakeholders in London. This included heads and assistant directors of SEND or inclusion from a range of different London boroughs. We held semi-structured online interviews, covering:

- What is inclusive practice?
- What are the main benefits of inclusive practice?
- How widespread is non-inclusive practice in London and who is most impacted?
- How can inclusion in London's schools be improved?

[64] Those in the first two years of their teaching careers

[65] Guillermot et al. (2024), Teachers' non-response bias in questionnaires about their attitude towards inclusive education

### Other stakeholders

Finally, we held online interviews with several other stakeholders including from the DfE, Ofsted, a teaching union and charities involved with inclusion of young people with SEND. These did not follow a set interview structure, and instead focused on the specific work of each organisation.

## 5. Quantitative data collection

Qualitative findings were supported, cross-checked and challenged by analysis of both publicly available and restricted-access quantitative data. This aimed to understand how widespread the experiences shared in the qualitative data collection were, identify trends, and support key qualitative findings with data covering the whole of London, not just those local authority areas and schools directly engaged.

### Public data sources

A range of publicly available data sources published by the DfE are used throughout this analysis, including:

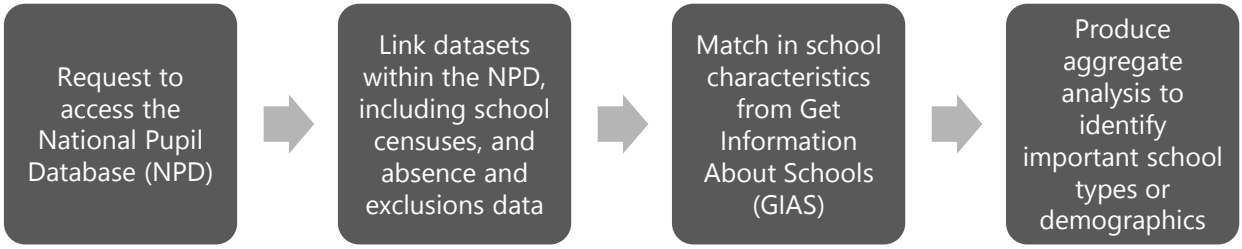
- SEND cohort sizes and primary needs
- Requests for EHCP assessments, issued plan timeliness and attended provision
- Special school numbers and cross-border movement
- Teaching assistant and educational psychologist workforce
- Suspensions and exclusions
- Absence
- KS4 attainment and progress
- NEET and participation rates
- Pupil destinations after KS4
- Pupil destinations after KS5

### National pupil database (NPD)

In addition to the analysis of public data, we also secured access to the National Pupil Database (NPD). As shown in the diagram below, this allowed us to link school census, absence and suspension data to better understand:

- Suspensions of pupils with SEND (2021/22)
- Persistent absenteeism of pupils with SEND (2022/23)
- Rates of pupils with SEND leaving their school at non-standard times (Between January 2022 and January 2023)

We produced both summary descriptive statistics and regression analysis from the NPD data, allowing us to look at gaps between groups, as well as statistically important drivers of these outcomes.



## Limitations

### Data limitations

- **Coverage of the NPD** – While the NPD is the best possible source for this analysis, covering all pupils in state-funded schools, our analysis does exclude pupils with SEND who were in independent or non-school provision. It also excludes those who have only very recently entered the state-funded school system, for example recent immigrants.
- **Unmeasurable factors** – While we were able to look at the roll of more easily measurable factors like ethnicity and socioeconomic disadvantage, there are many other factors that could have impacted a young person's chance of being suspended, a persistent absentee, or leaving their school, that are not measurable and therefore could not be accounted for in the quantitative data analysis. We have attempted to identify these through the qualitative data collection.
- **Qualitative data sample** – While the qualitative data samples are good, with several local authorities and dozens of parents and carers of young people with SEND engaged, there will be some bias in which volunteers were involved in the research. In particular, it may be that those parents and carers who have had the most negative experiences were more likely to engage with our research. In addition, we have not engaged directly with parents and carers of children without SEND.
- **COVID-19 pandemic** – Where longitudinal data has been analysed, it often includes years affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdowns. These years are likely to be unusual for reasons unrelated to the questions of interest and could skew results.

### Methodological limitations

- **Lack of control group** – As this research was conducted in real-life conditions, there is no comparable control group. This makes it difficult to establish causal links.
- **Large sample size** – In our statistical analysis, we are working with extremely large sample sizes. This has the risk of finding statistically significant differences that are, in reality, very small. To avoid this, we have focused more on effect size than statistical significance to assess our findings.
- **Definitional limitations** – Using quantitative data to estimate inclusion requires the researchers to make judgements as to what is inclusive, which may not reflect the reality on the ground. For example, a school with high rates of EHCPs may be attracting large numbers of pupils with SEND due to its inclusive practices, or it may be failing to meet needs of those on SEN Support.
- **Constraints of focus groups** – The focus group format was chosen for parents, carers and young people with SEND in order to create a less intimidating atmosphere than a one on one interview and to increase the sample size, however it may have impacted how much some people felt able to share. This was mitigated by the use of the survey, and one on one interviews with other school staff.
- **City of London** – Due to the City of London's small size and unusual make-up, it is often excluded from analysis.

### Practical limitations

- **Time and resource constraints** – Due to project time and resource constraints, the research has necessarily been limited in scope. For instance, we have not been able to follow-up with participants over a longer period of time.

# Appendix 3: Council engagement

As outlined in the report, a range of local authorities and schools were engaged in this research. While many more local authority stakeholders contributed in other ways, the table below outlines in which local we held stakeholder interviews and school visits.

| Participating London local authority | Sub-region | Council political leadership at time of research | Participated in stakeholder interviews | Supported with school visits (in Spring 2024) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Barking and Dagenham** | Outer London | Labour | Y | |
| **Camden** | Inner London | Labour | Y | Y |
| **Enfield** | Outer London | Labour | Y | Y |
| **Hammersmith and Fulham** | Inner London | Labour | Y | |
| **Haringey** | Outer London | Labour | Y | |
| **Harrow** | Outer London | Conservative | Y | |
| **Kingston upon Thames** | Outer London | Liberal Democrat | Y | |
| **Lewisham** | Inner London | Labour | Y | Y |
| **Richmond upon Thames** | Outer London | Liberal Democrat | Y | |
| **Tower Hamlets** | Inner London | Other | | Y |
| **Wandsworth** | Inner London | Labour | Y | Y |

# Appendix 4: Parent/Carer survey

A short online survey of parents and carers of young people with SEND was carried out in Spring 2024, with 225 respondents. This survey asked the following five questions:

**1. What does "inclusion" mean to you? (Tick all that apply)**

- Being educated in a mainstream school
- Being educated in local community
- A sense of "belonging" and being "welcomed" in school
- Early and accurate identification of individual needs
- Flexible education provision that meets individual needs
- Provision for pupils with SEND being a priority, not an "add-on"
- High quality classroom teaching that supports people who learn differently
- Access to educational professionals with appropriate expertise in SEND
- Other

**2. What non-inclusive practice have you and your family experienced? (Tick all that apply)**

- Learning needs not being met in school
- Delays in meeting needs
- Exclusion from mainstream classes
- Suspensions or expulsion from school
- School policies not appropriately adjusted to meet need
- Being discouraged from applying for a place in a school
- Inflexible approach taken by a school
- Ineffective 1-2-1 support
- Other

**3. What has been the impact of non-inclusive practice? (Tick all that apply)**

- Emotional distress
- Financial challenges
- Loss of job or career
- Other

**4. If applicable, please share a summary of particularly effective inclusion you have experienced:**

Free text response

**5. If applicable, please share a summary of particularly ineffective inclusion you have experienced:**

Free text response

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