

INFORMATION SHEET – PROPOSED SEND CHANGES, FEB 2026

On 23 February 2026 the UK Government issued a white paper “*Every child achieving and thriving*” revealing plans to overhaul the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system.

If your child is (or you’re worried your child might be) dyslexic, here’s what these proposals means for the kind of support they could receive at school — and how that support may change.

Why the current system is under pressure

The current SEND system was introduced in 2014 with great expectations. It put children and parents at the heart of a process designed to overhaul the previous disjointed, complex and adversarial regime.

Unfortunately, problems with the new system began appearing rapidly as the number of children with education, health and care plans (EHCP’s) ballooned. Driven by increasing diagnoses of autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), that number has increased by 80% since 2018. Because EHCP’s theoretically guarantee specialist support for children, the cost of SEND provision has risen by 50% in the same period to £11 billion whilst still failing to keep up with demand.

In an attempt to keep a lid on costs, local authorities have resisted making specialist provision for many children forcing parents to go to tribunal to have their needs met – a process that is costly and time consuming for all concerned

The proposed reforms

Financial sustainability is the main driver behind the white paper. The current system is threatening bankruptcy for local councils whose SEND debts are projected to reach £14 billion by 2027/28 without reform.

The proposed reforms are therefore designed to simplify the system and to shift more support into mainstream schools so that children can receive help earlier and more routinely within their school without always needing an EHCP first.

Such help might include:

- Individual support plans (less formal than EHCPs)
- More specialist spaces in secondary schools for neurodivergent pupils
- Improved teacher training
- More in-school specialist support

For many children with dyslexia — especially milder or moderate needs — this could mean support becomes available **without having to negotiate the long and stressful EHCP process.**

EHCPs are likely to become more focused on children with the most severe or complex difficulties which means:

- It may become harder to obtain an EHCP for needs that schools are expected to manage internally.
- Some children’s eligibility may be reviewed when moving to secondary school.

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What does this mean for a child who might be dyslexic?

Dyslexia varies widely in severity. Under the new proposals:

- If your child's needs are mild to moderate, support may increasingly be delivered within school through structured literacy intervention, targeted teaching strategies, and classroom adjustments — without needing an EHCP.
- If their needs are significant and long-term, an EHCP would still be available, but likely under stricter criteria.

The key change is toward earlier support in mainstream schools rather than support that depends on securing a legal plan.

Should parents be worried?

Currently these are just proposals — not final law.

What's reassuring:

- Children already in special schools are not expected to lose their places.
- The stated aim is to improve educational experiences, not remove support.
- There is strong political scrutiny from parent groups and MPs, so major reductions in rights are likely to face challenge.

What remains uncertain:

- How consistently schools will be funded and trained to deliver improved in-house support.
- How eligibility criteria for EHCPs may change in practice.

The summary for you as a parent

If you're concerned about dyslexia:

- Early identification and school-based support are likely to become even more important.
- Schools may be expected to provide structured literacy interventions without you needing to pursue an EHCP immediately.
- Keeping clear records of assessments, progress, and communications will remain important if more formal support is ever needed.

So, in summary the proposals imply a transition from *"fight for a legal document"* to *"support delivered as standard"*. Whether the final legislation and its implementation achieves that objective is what many parents will be watching closely.