

# Once upon a time...

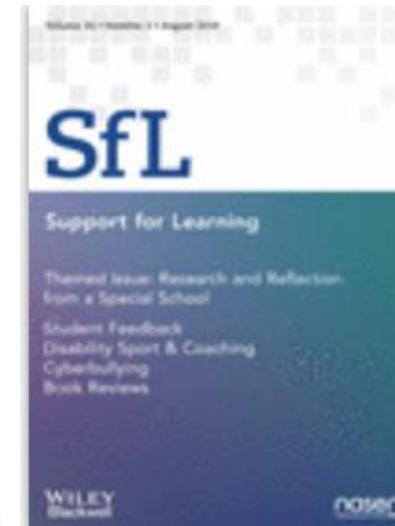


Guest Editorial

## **SEND built in, not bolted on**

[Margaret Mulholland](#)

First published: 08 October 2019 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12258>



*Margaret Mullholland, Director of Development and Research at the school, spoke about different parties approaching shared items of language and of the concepts of Think, Pair, Share.*

*She talked about building the SEND Curriculum for career-long learning following Initial Teacher Training and the gaining of Newly Qualified Status.*

*New Teachers can work towards implementing a combination of Personalisation, Inclusion and Differentiation when working together for all pupils.*

*These pupils need not be defined by labels, she said, and yet labels can be useful as part of an inquiry about pupils' requirements, without using the word needs, necessarily.*

# Fast forward to now

Inclusion, Inclusion, Inclusion...

‘Everyone’s forgotten about the curriculum’

# A broad and varied curriculum

Curriculum is not simply about content delivery; it is about crafting a purposeful, values-rich narrative that prepares all learners for a life of meaning, agency and contribution.

We must look beyond the traditional and towards the transformational. This means reimagining curriculum. At the heart of this reimagining lies the principle of inclusion.

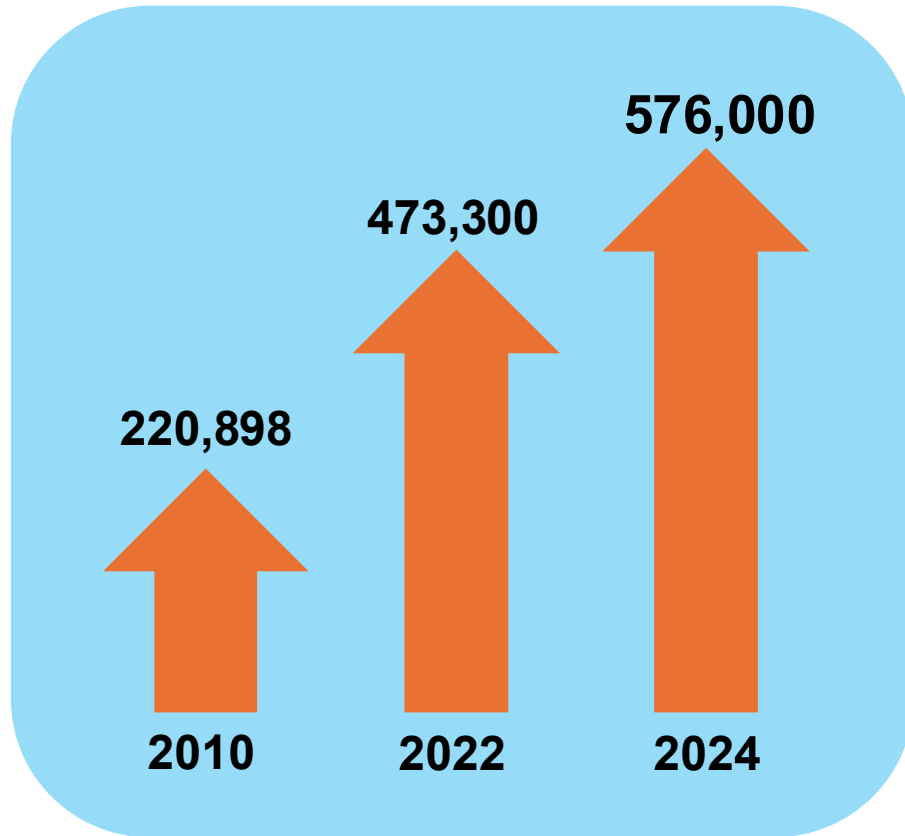
A truly just curriculum reflects the lives and potential of all children, not just the dominant narratives. It empowers neurodivergent learners, embraces multilingualism and gives a voice to often-unheard minorities.

A diverse curriculum is not an optional layer; it is foundational to high standards and deep engagement for all.



# 2024: SEND needs continue to rise

EHCP inflation now at 11% (up from 9% 2023)



Total children with an active EHCP

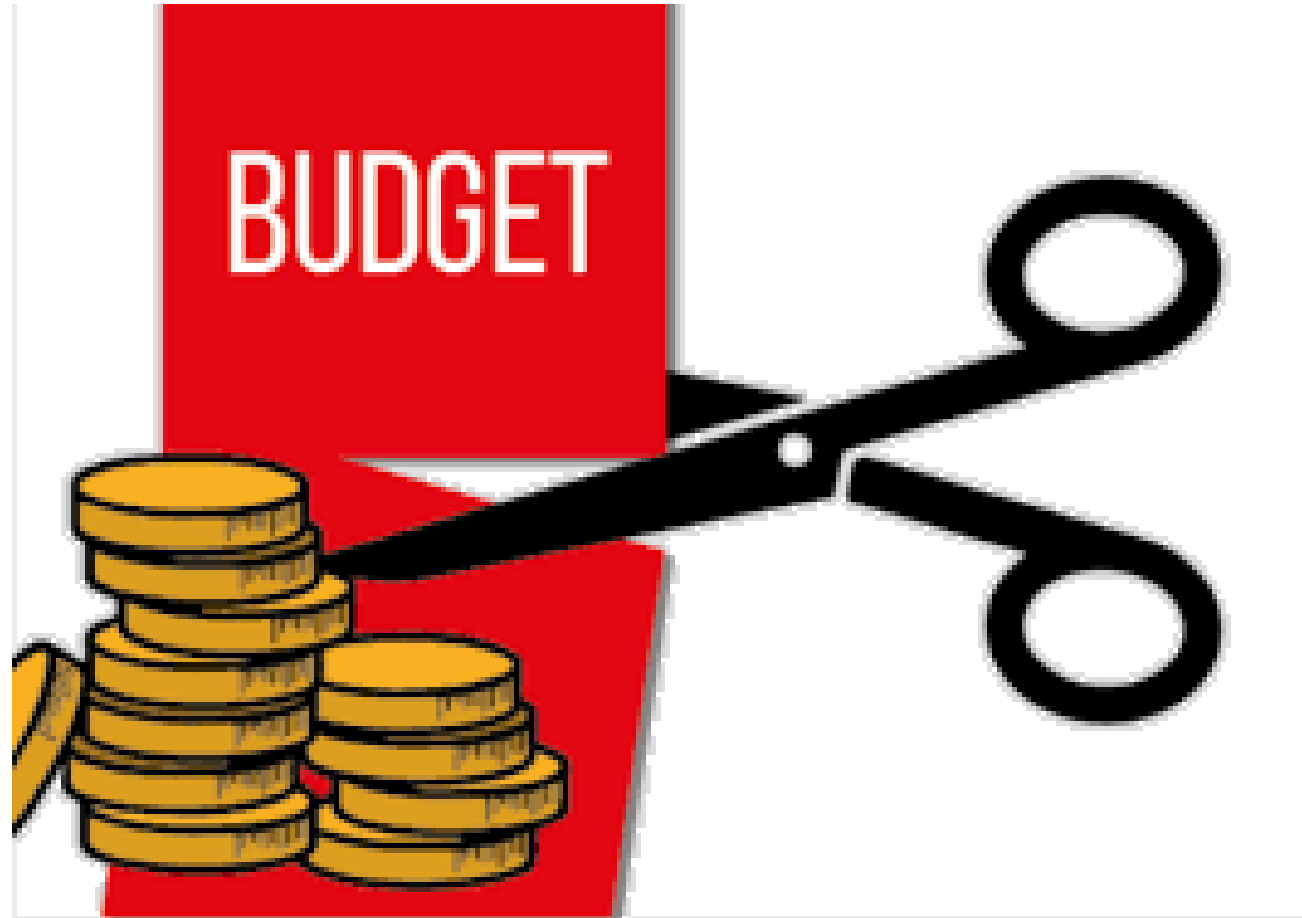
**18.4%**  
children have SEND

**4.8%**  
had an EHCP as of Jun 24

**13.6%**  
on SEN Support

18.4% = 1,673,205 children

Available funding is reducing





# We need to think and work differently

## Can 2025 bring a radical rethink of how we consider SEND?

What would it take to create a truly fair education system? It needs to go beyond 'brave school leaders', argues Margaret Mulholland  
13th January 2025, 6:00am



## This isn't a SEND crisis, it's an education crisis. Now let's fix it

Our approach to SEND has been wrong, writes Margaret Mulholland, but here are five ways to make it right

3rd October 2024



## This is what improving whole-school inclusion looks like

Improving schooling for pupils with SEND needs a systemic approach, says Margaret Mulholland, but shining examples show it can be done

1st November 2024



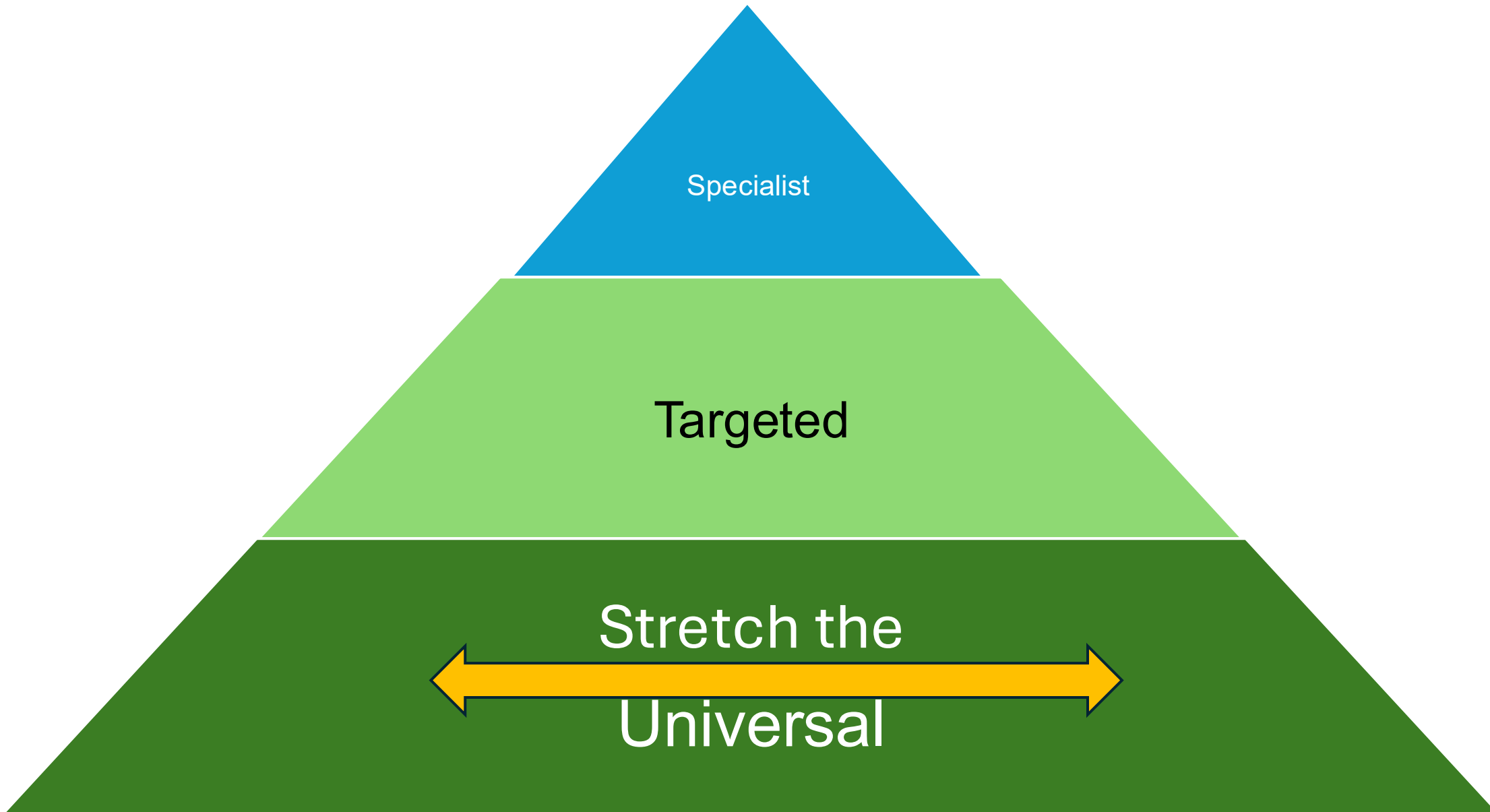
## Why effective adaptive teaching means changing our focus

With an increased focus on adaptive teaching, it's time to radically reconsider where our lessons are aimed, argues Margaret Mulholland

12th December 2024



We need to situate SEND within the wider system. How do we do that?



**FEATURE**

# Do we need better initial teacher training on SEND?

‘Better training’ is often cited as the first step in improving inclusive practice in schools, but this might not be the simple fix it seems, as Margaret Mulholland explains

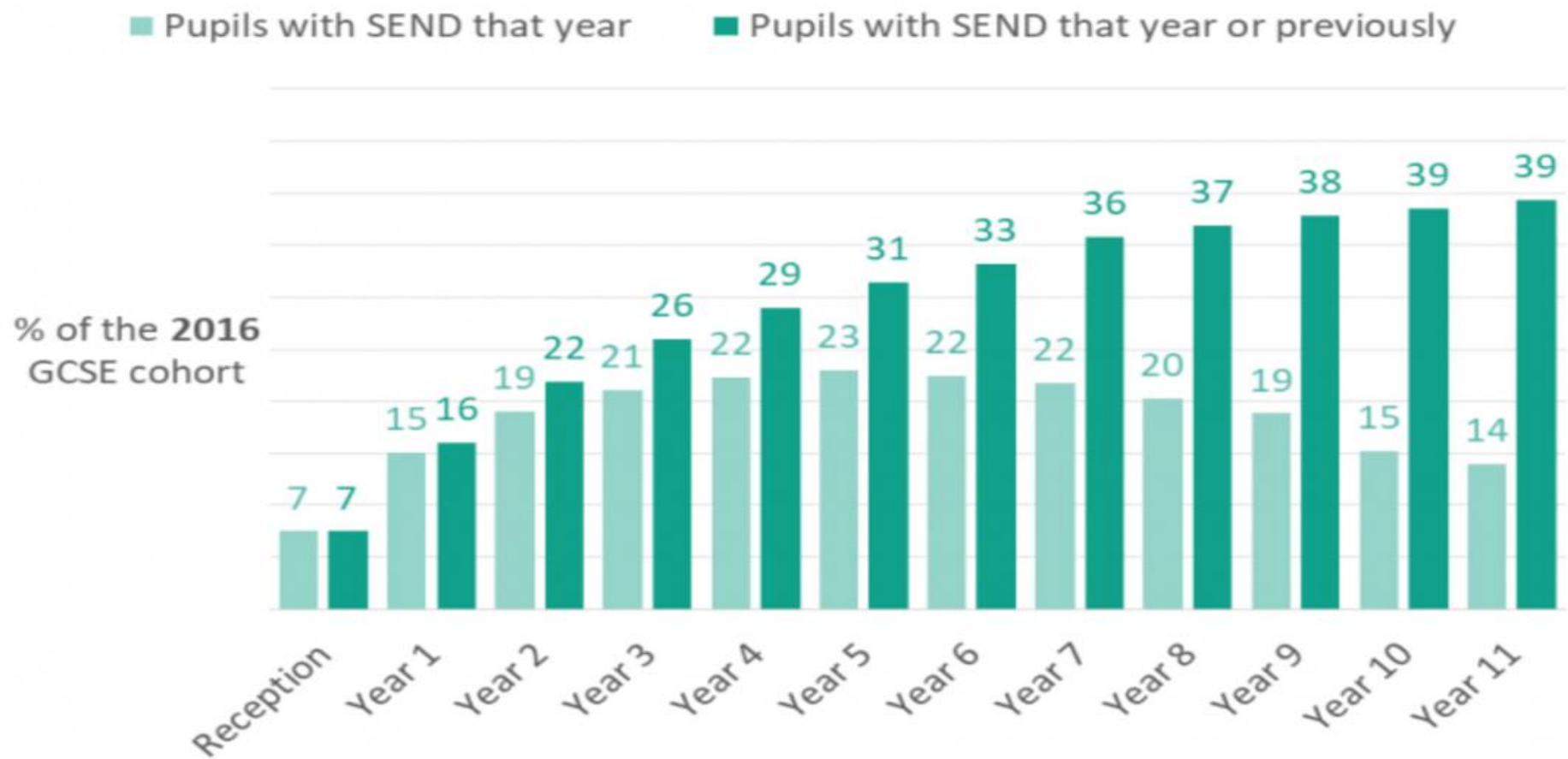
18th December 2025, 6:00am



## Key messages

- SEND pressures affect teacher wellbeing through cumulative demand, moral strain, prolonged uncertainty around support provision and assessment delays **without sufficient support**
- These pressures are particularly **acute for early career teachers** but are reported across career stages.
- Teacher wellbeing is shaped not only by classroom practice, but by system-level factors including **funding, assessment timelines, and accountability pressures.**
- Improving teacher wellbeing in SEND-intensive contexts requires **changes to ITT, school cultures, and the wider SEND system.**

Agius, C., Ainsworth, S., & Adamson, C., S., & Oldfield (2026). *SEND and teacher wellbeing: implications for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and early career support*. Policy Briefing Note. Manchester Metropolitan University. Available at <https://tinyurl.com/Teacher-Resilience-SEND>



EPI: Prevalence of SEND: school year snapshots versus cumulative ever identified (Hutchinson2017)

## Increasing complexity

Co-occurrence, overlapping, co-existing...

- **1 in 5** people with Dyslexia have DCD (Kaplan, 1998)
- **3 in 10** people with Dyslexia have ADHD (Germano and Gagliano, 2010)
- **1 in 2** people with DLD/SLI have Dyslexia (Snowling, 2000)
- **1 in 3** people with ADHD have DCD (Gillberg, 1998)
- **1-2 in 4** people with ASC have ADHD (Handen, 2015)
- **4 in 5** people with ASC have DCD (Cacola, 2017)
- **1 in 2-3** people with DLD have DCD (Archibald, 2008)
- **41%** of people with DLD have ASC (Georgitsi, 2021)

# What teachers told us....

- **SEND demand has outpaced staffing, funding, and specialist provision**

Teachers describe a sharp increase in both the number and complexity of SEND needs in mainstream classrooms, without corresponding increases in staffing, funding, or access to specialist provision. SEND is experienced as routine and cumulative rather than exceptional.

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*“You’ve got five or six, seven children with really diverse SEN needs, that actually have EHCPs. But the funding isn’t there.” (Primary teacher)*

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**Why this matters for teachers and training:**

Sustained overload and reduced confidence are common. Teachers describe a mismatch between how adaptive teaching is framed during training and the realities of persistently high-need classrooms with limited adult support.

# What teachers told us....

## **SEND-related workload routinely exceeds protected PPA time**

SEND paperwork, planning adaptations, and coordination with external agencies frequently exceed protected PPA time and spill into evenings, limiting rest and recovery.

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*“You don’t get it done in your PPA... I didn’t turn my laptop off till 10:50pm... I hadn’t even had tea by then. So I was like oh well, I just won’t eat. Then that becomes like a routine.” (Primary teacher)*

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### **Why this matters for teachers and training:**

Teachers describe cumulative erosion of recovery, fatigue, and increased burnout risk. SEND-related workload affects not just volume of work, but teachers’ ability to sustain themselves emotionally and physically.

# What do the findings tell us



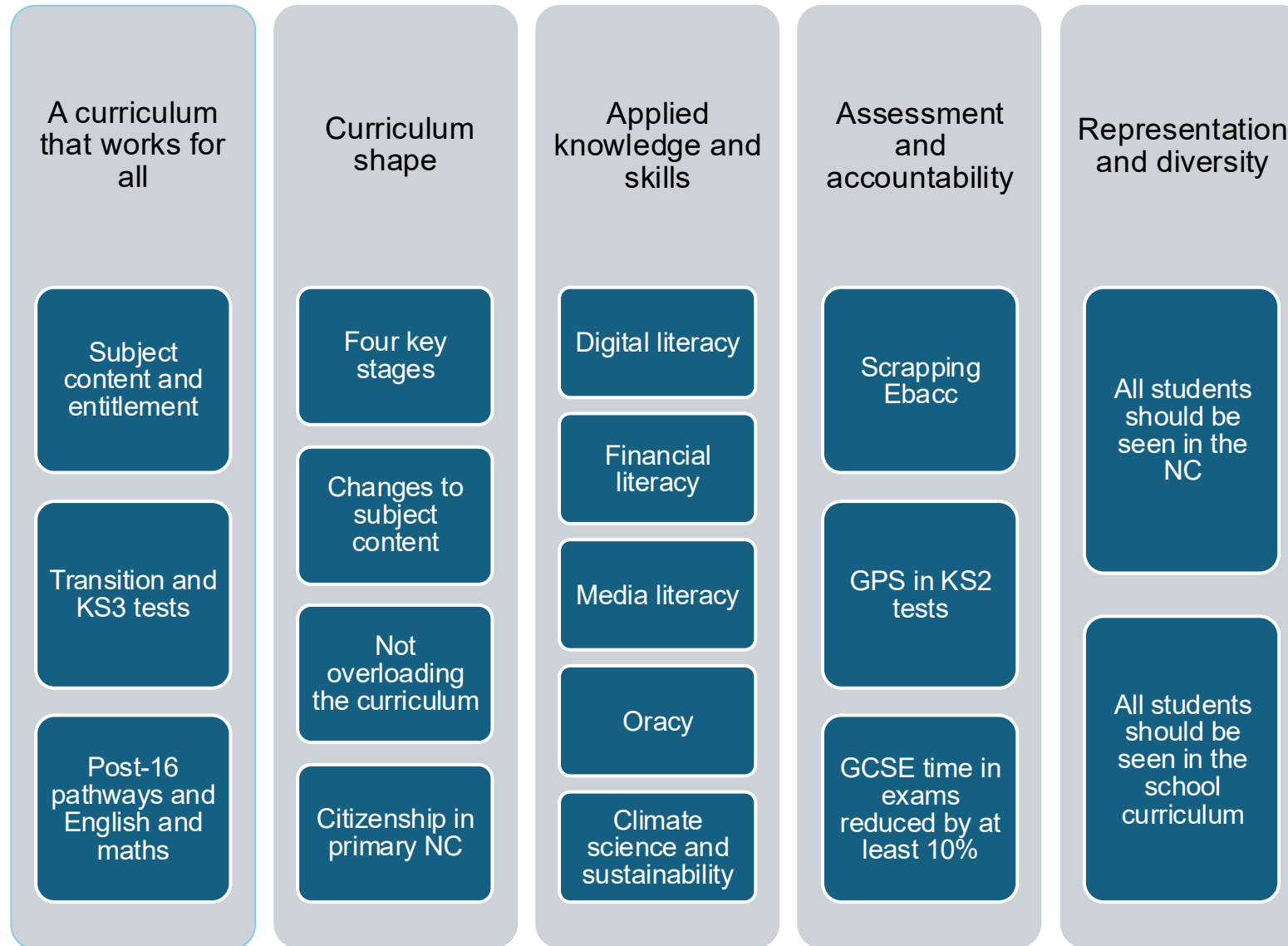
SEND affects teacher wellbeing not simply through workload, but through a combination of:

- cumulative and uneven demand;
- moral and emotional strain;
- prolonged waiting and uncertainty around assessment and provision;
- responsibility without commensurate authority or sufficient support.

Teachers also highlighted tensions between curriculum demands and the ability to adopt child-centred or flexible approaches for pupils with SEND, as well as growing strain in relationships with parents around responsibility, expectations, and the limits of school-based support.

While schools often work hard to support staff, teachers emphasise that many of these pressures are structurally produced - shaped by factors beyond individual schools' control, particularly funding, assessment timelines, accountability frameworks, and availability of specialist provision.

# The Curriculum and Assessment Review: key themes



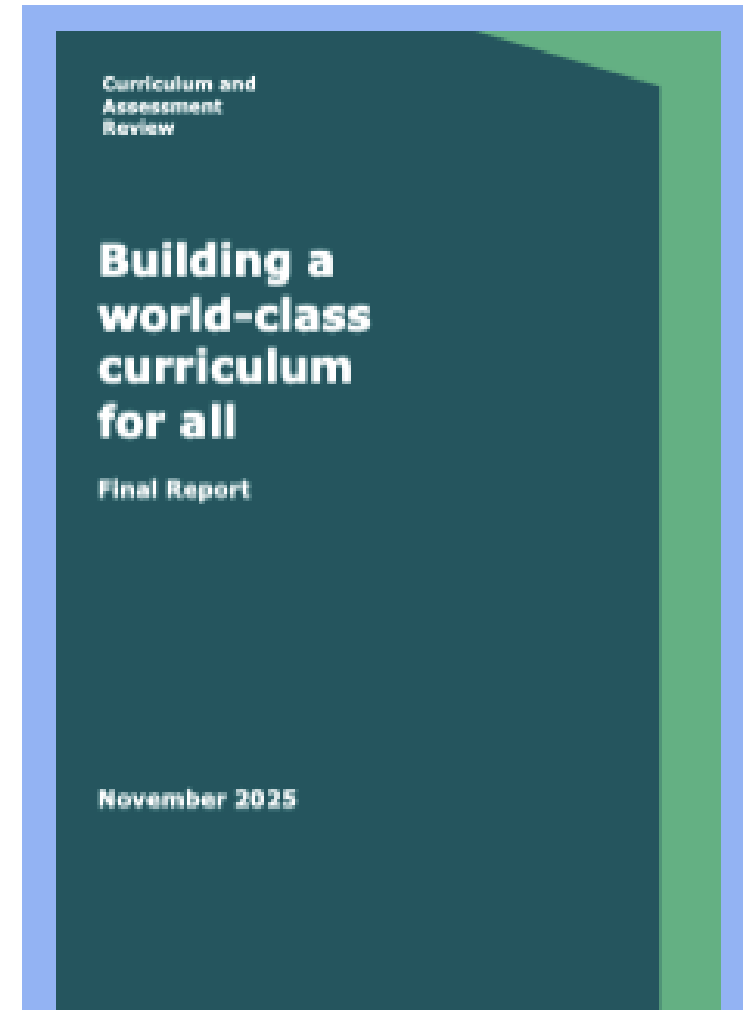
# Equality



# Equity



- Who is this curriculum for?
- Whose knowledge is being centred?
- Which creativities are we educating for?
- What futures are being imagined?



# How an 'equity lens' can transform school leadership

School leadership needs to become more 'equity-centred' to reflect the changing SEND landscape, says Margaret Mulholland

3rd October 2023, 4:24pm



<https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/hope-for-send-support-and-inclusion-in-2026>

# Putting SEND at the heart of school improvement

## Our SEND Mission...

*What do we want to be remembered for?*

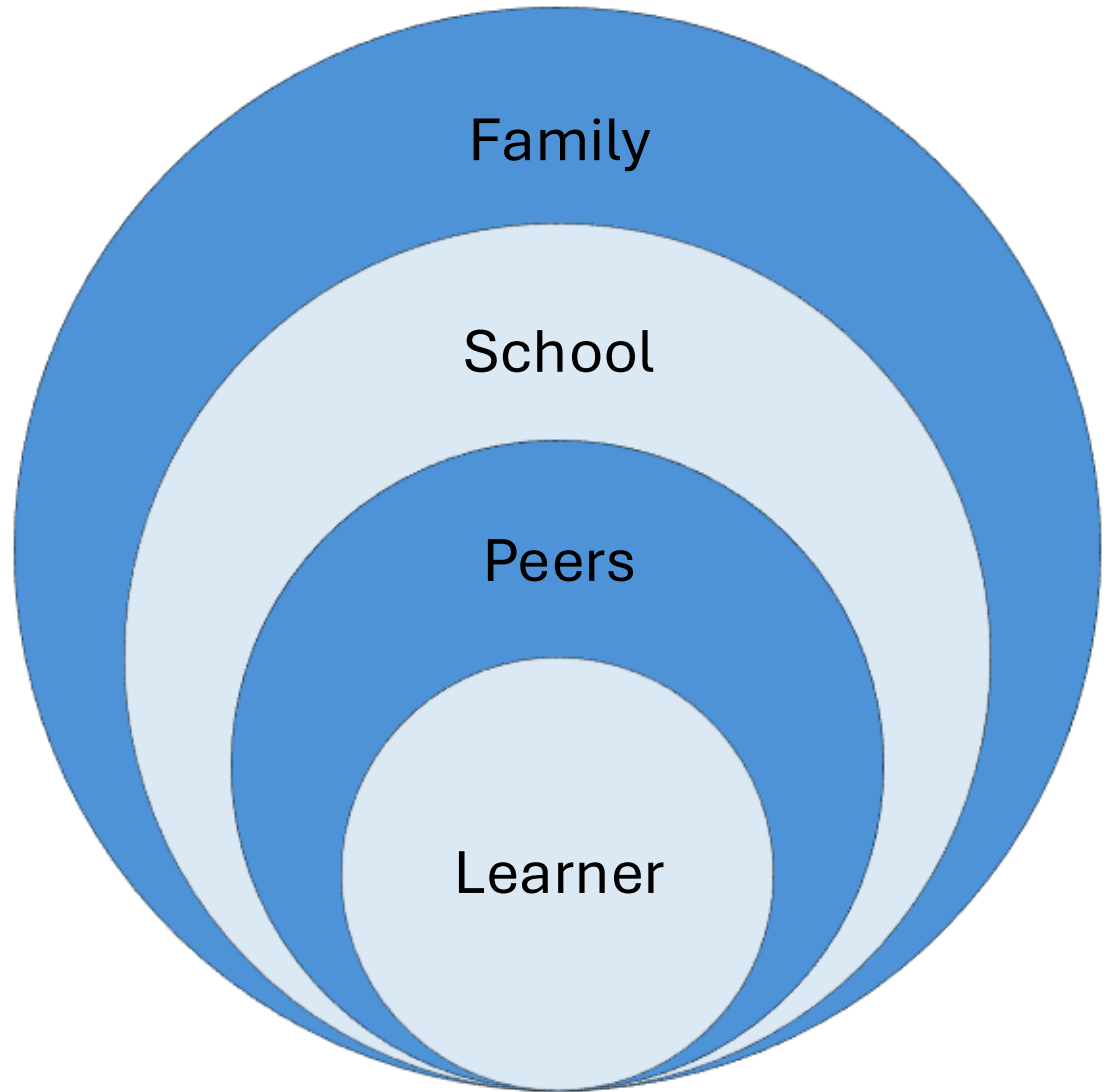
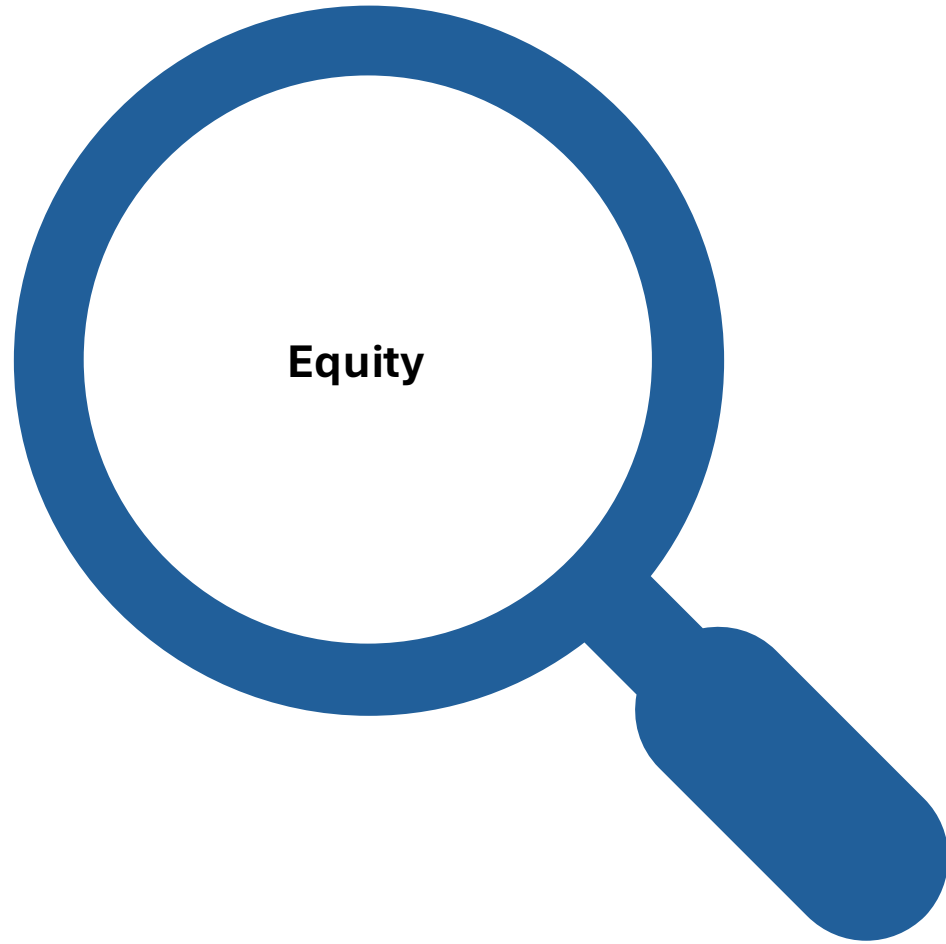
The Trust had inclusion at its heart. It ensured that every child was seen, valued and included. All pupils thrived, and went on to succeed in a fulfilling and meaningful life

## Lingfield SEND Strategy

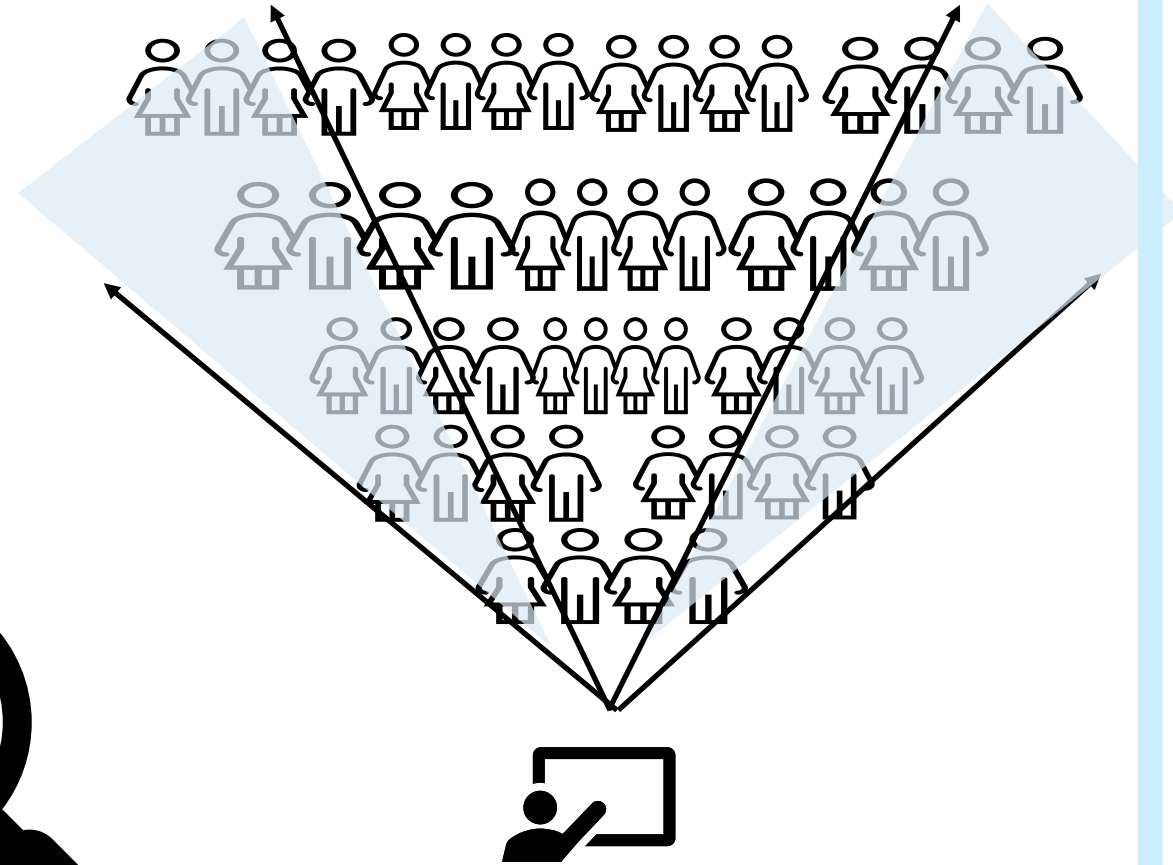
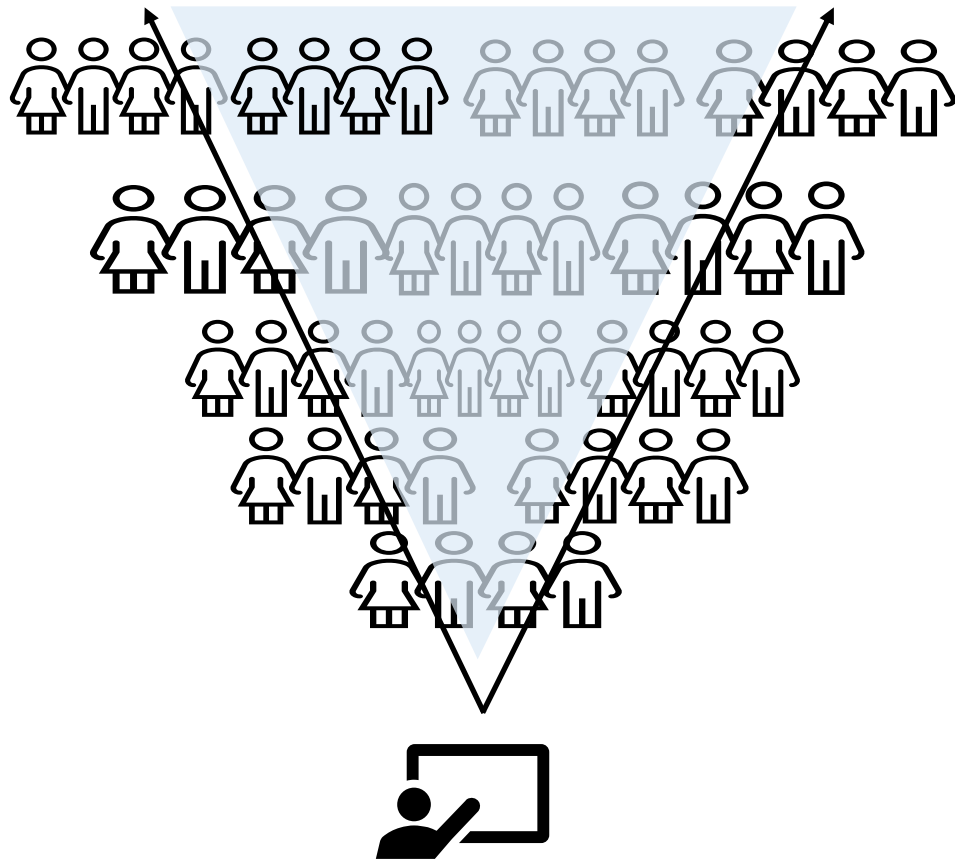
### *Six Principles*



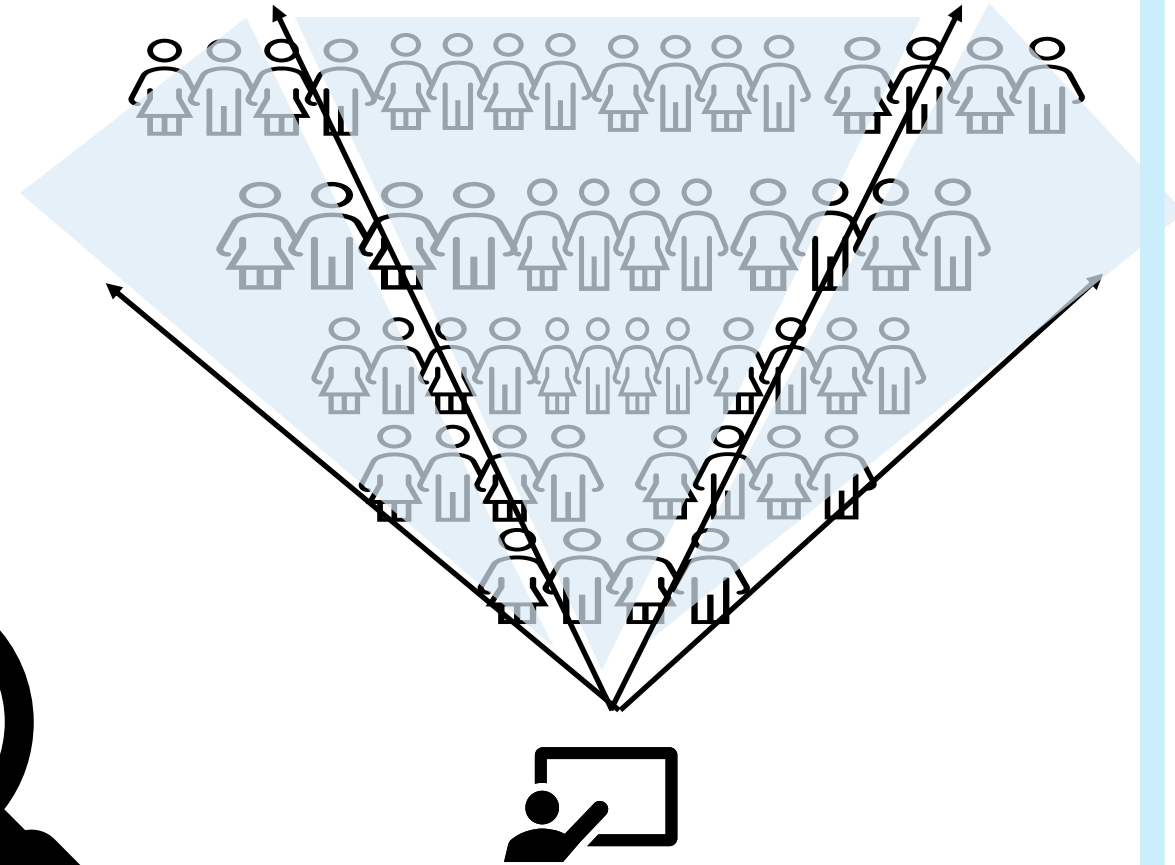
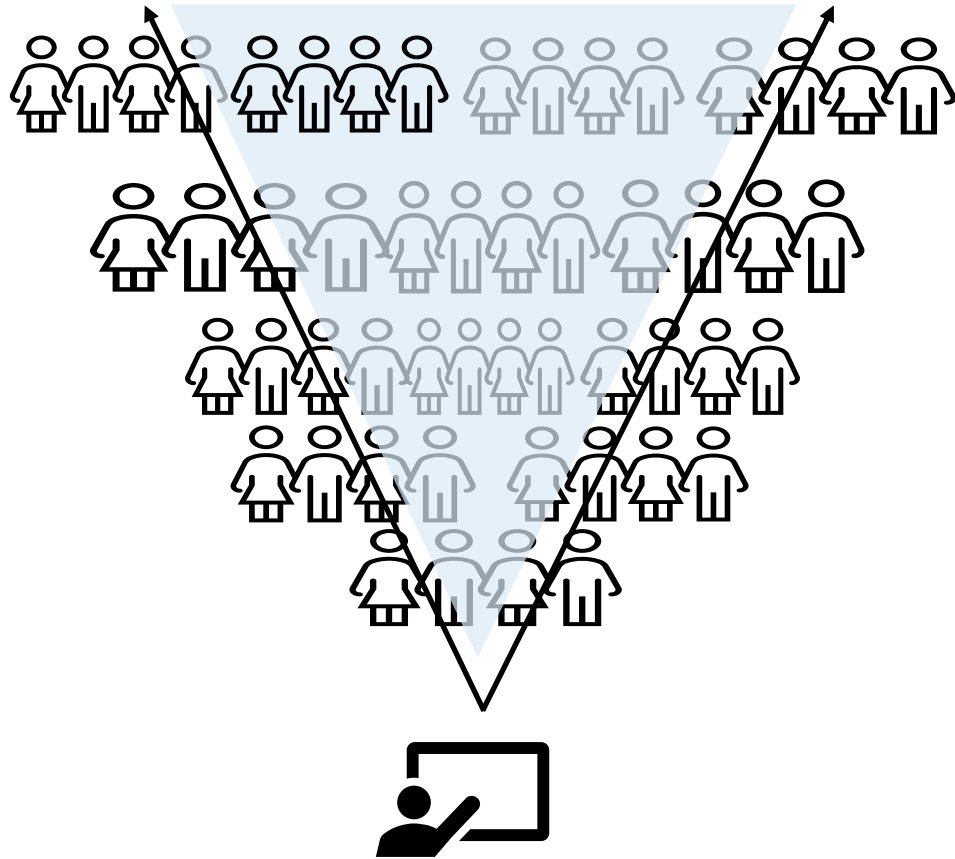
# Vulnerability is a 'state not a trait'



# Revisit our focus



# Pivot the lens – to ensure we are teaching everyone



# Key stage 2 attainment

Expected standard reading,  
writing and maths (combined)

**62%**

of pupils, up from 61% in 2024

Higher standard reading,  
writing and maths (combined)

**8%**

of pupils, unchanged since 2023 and  
2024

Disadvantage gap index

**3.14**

up from 3.13 in 2024

Expected standard reading

**75%**

of pupils, up from 74% in 2024

Expected standard writing

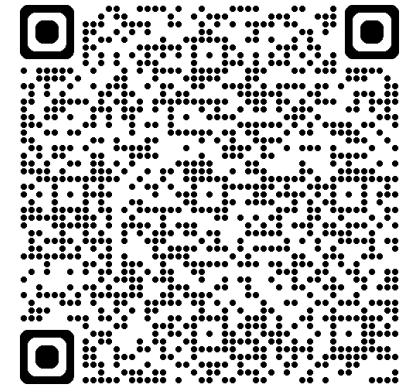
**72%**

of pupils, unchanged from 2024

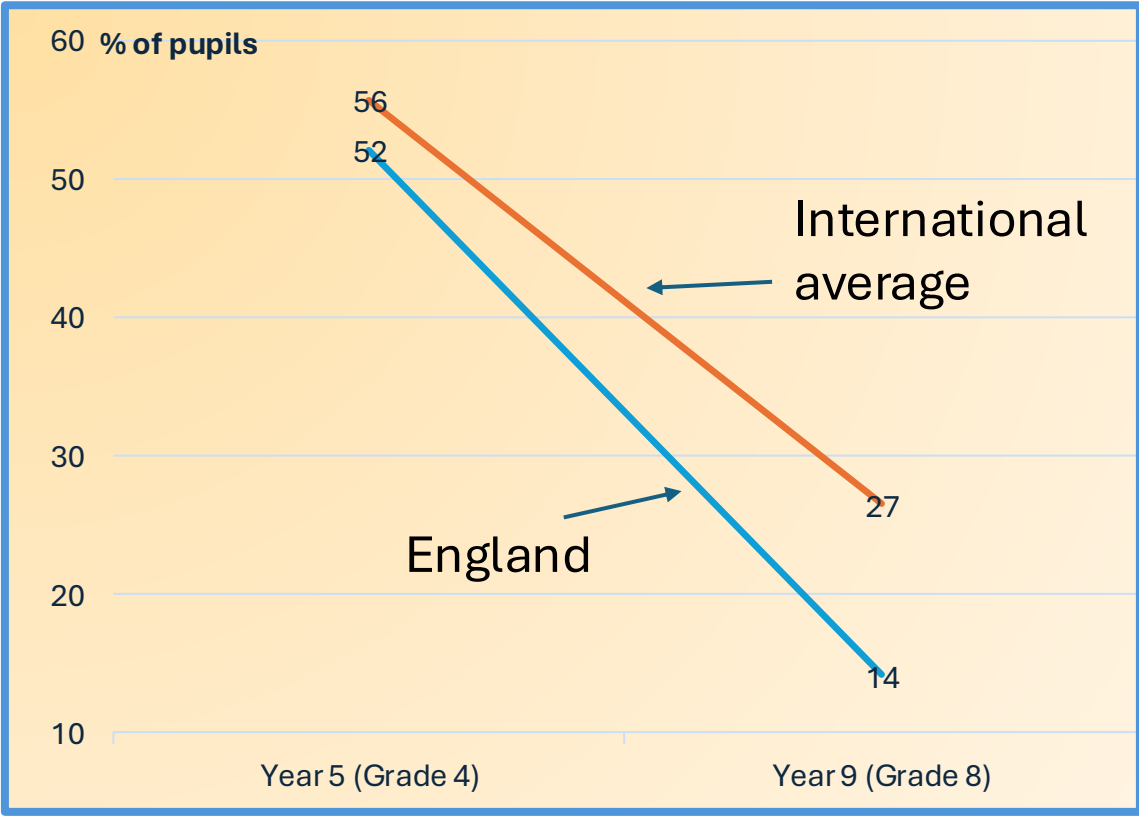
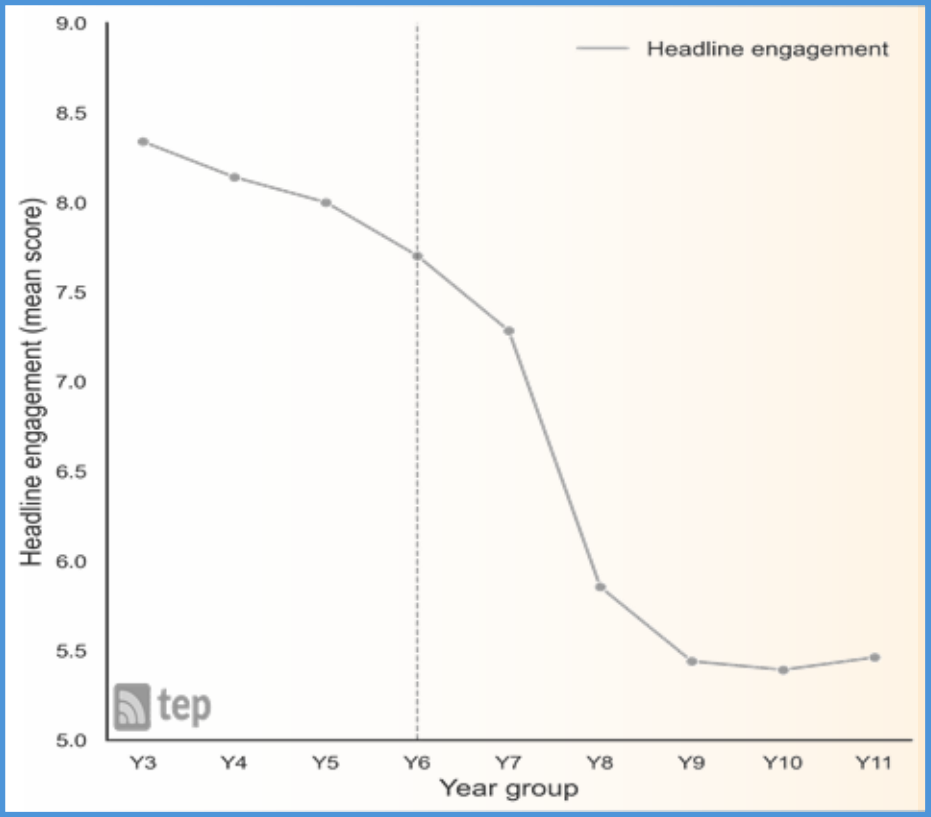
Expected standard maths

**74%**

of pupils, up from 73% in 2024



# Engagement: A problem or an opportunity?

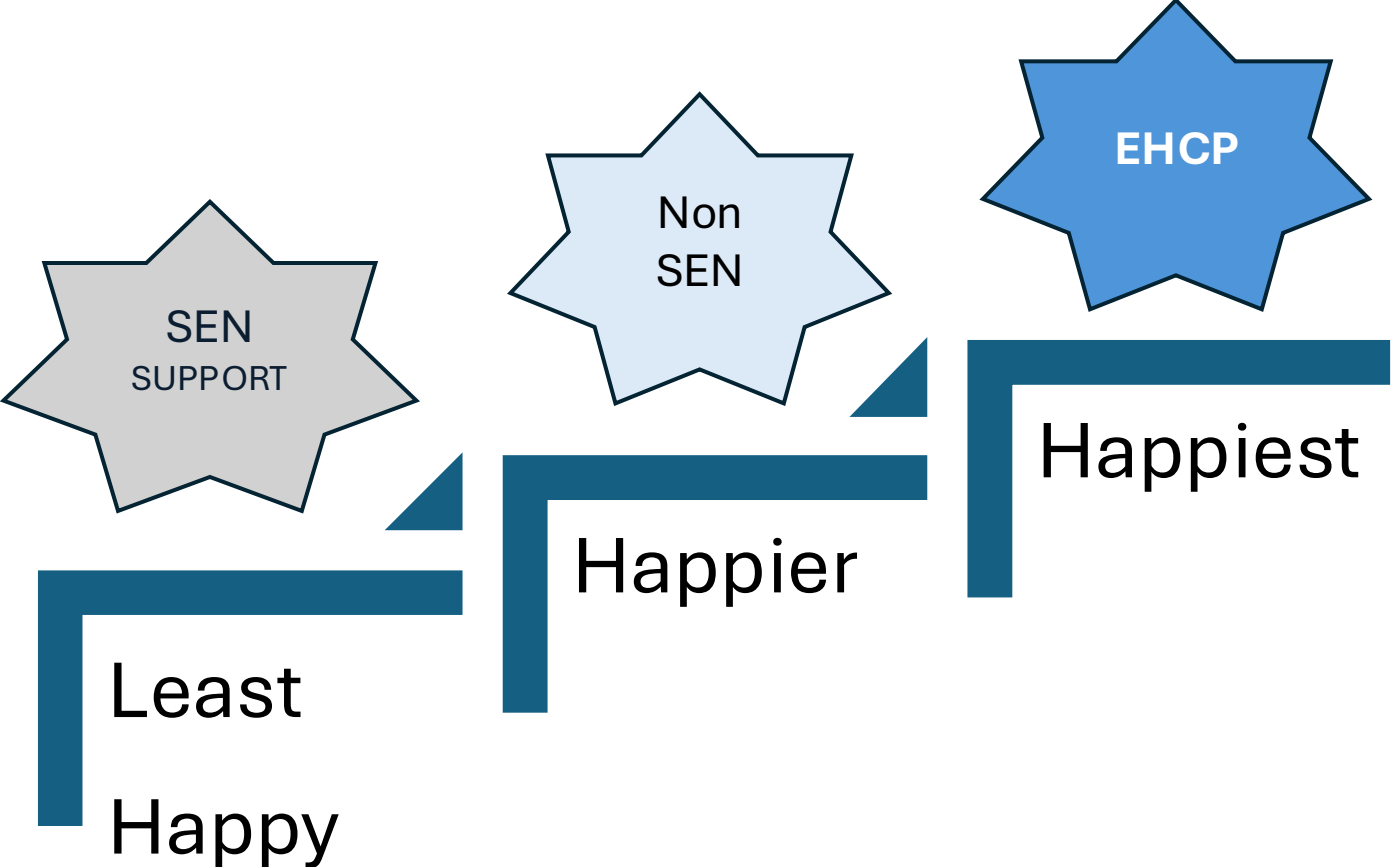


## Low-income white children report the lowest levels of cognitive engagement in schools

| Group                     | Agency | Value of education | Interest in lessons | Behaviour |
|---------------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Black. Not FSM.           | 8.06*  | 7.33*              | 5.23*               | 4.85*     |
| Asian. Not FSM.           | 7.96*  | 7.35*              | 5.51*               | 5.38*     |
| South Asian. Not FSM.     | 7.81*  | 7.12*              | 5.23*               | 5.23*     |
| Black. FSM.               | 7.71*  | 6.97*              | 5.06*               | 4.79*     |
| Asian. FSM.               | 7.51*  | 6.87*              | 4.99*               | 4.94      |
| Mixed race. Not FSM.      | 7.50*  | 6.90*              | 5.15*               | 5.18*     |
| South Asian. FSM.         | 7.45*  | 6.77*              | 4.78                | 4.82      |
| White (Other). Not FSM.   | 7.43*  | 6.73*              | 5.16*               | 5.13*     |
| White (British). Not FSM. | 7.24*  | 6.69*              | 5.04*               | 5.12*     |
| White (Other). FSM.       | 7.20*  | 6.58*              | 4.86                | 4.80      |
| Mixed race. FSM.          | 7.01   | 6.41               | 4.69                | 4.77      |
| White (British). FSM      | 6.74   | 6.31               | 4.56                | 4.59      |

Enjoyment of school

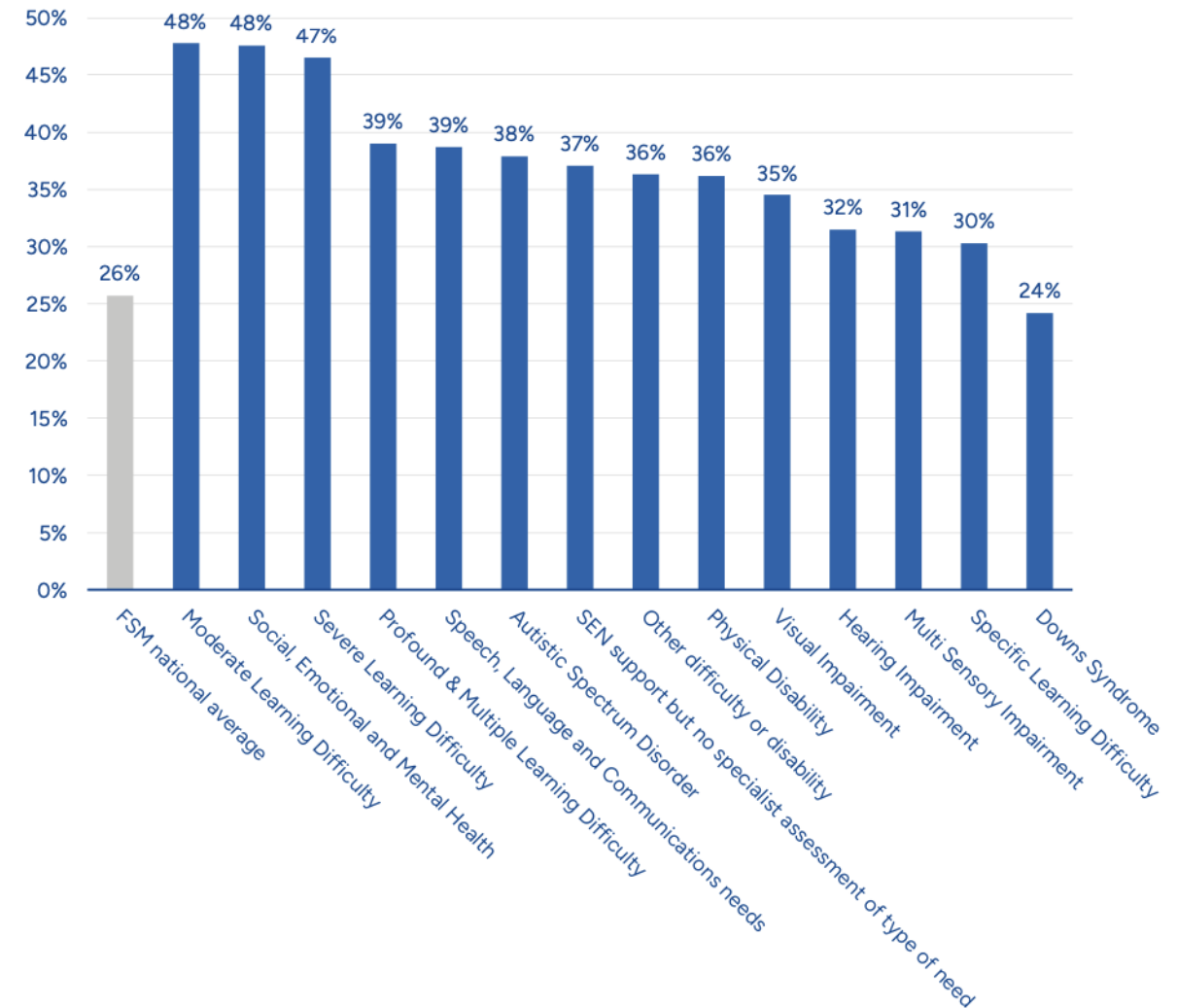
# Happy to go to school on a Monday morning ?



# Double disadvantage

- Children eligible for FSM are over-represented within the SEND cohort
- FSM with EHCP 43.8%
- FSM on send support 39.9%
- FSM national average 25.7%
- Underrepresentation of FSM eligible children in certain diagnoses (eg ADHD/Dyslexia where private consult is prevalent or necessary)
- Poorer academic outcomes for FSM eligible children

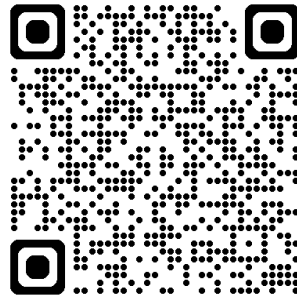
Figure 1: FSM proportion in each type of SEND for school year 2024/2025 - primary need only



# Double disadvantage

- **Policy makers should acknowledge the relationship between socio-economic background and SEND.** Policies designed to eliminate child poverty may help to reduce the prevalence of certain forms of SEND.
- **Policy makers must acknowledge the double disadvantage for those who are eligible for FSM and have SEND.** Reform should look to address specific issues that contribute to this.
- **Those children who are labelled as ‘SEND Support’ often have less positive experiences of education than those who have an EHCP.** Reform should consider how this group of children can be well supported, including how the support for this group is funded.
- **Simplifying the process of accessing support for SEND** should be a priority so that complexity does not act as an additional rationing system with some groups of parents better able to navigate processes than others.

# The 'Forgotten Third'



## Exam Question

‘People have become obsessed with travelling even further and ever faster. However, travel is expensive, dangerous, damaging and a total waste of time!’

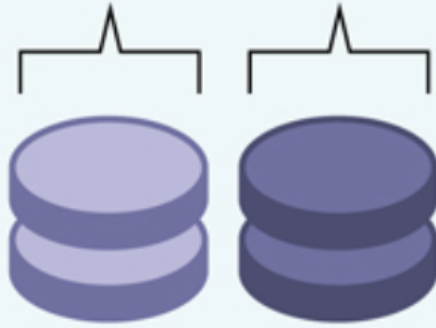
Write an article for a news website to argue your point of view on this statement.

(24 marks for content and organization, 16 marks for technical accuracy)  
**(40 Marks)**



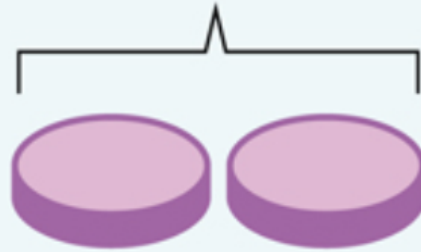
# Progress 8 and Attainment 8 proposal

## English Maths

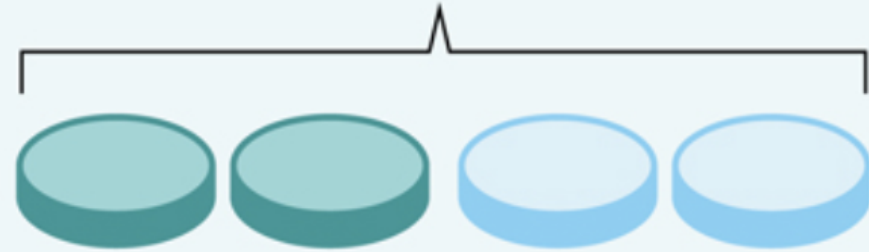


The English and Maths slots are double-weighted. In the English slot, a pupil must take both English Literature and English Language for the higher grade to be double-weighted. The lower grade can count in a breadth slot.

## Science



## Breadth



At least two breadth slots must include subjects from 2 of the following 3 categories:

- Humanities
- Creative subjects
- Languages

We're interested in the sector's views as to whether there should be a 4th science category which also includes computer science

# Post 16 white paper and consultation

## **V levels**

- V levels will replace existing AGQs and AAQs.
- DfE proposed that they will all be A level size (360 GLH) with no doubles or triples.
- Can be combined with A levels.

## **L2 and L1 pathways**

- New L2 pathways – further study and occupational.
- New L1 English and maths qualification for post-16 students who get grades U-2 in Year 11.

# English and maths resits

- More students aged 17-19 resat English and maths in summer 2025.
- Yet the 'pass' rate for this cohort remained only 19.7%.
- Roughly a third of 16-year-olds don't achieve a Grade 4+.
- From September 2025, schools **must** provide 100 hours of each subject as a condition of P16 funding.
- New L1 test – but when?



# The Accessible Curriculum

Providing access to education is more than telling people to give every child a seat at the table.

It's about ensuring that every child understands what is happening at the table to the best of their ability.

# Missed opportunity

While the Review outlines positive steps, it misses key opportunities to redefine accessibility for modern learners.

- Technology as transformation: The Review treats digital tools as curriculum topics, not as enablers of equitable access to learning and assessment.
- Assessment innovation: Retaining high-stakes exams as the “fairest” system overlooks adaptive, modular, and authentic assessment methods that could better support learners with SEND, mental health needs, or anxiety.

# Curriculum review was missed opportunity to improve SEND crisis

The curriculum review promised to remove blocks for schools to deliver good outcomes for children with special needs – but it has failed in two key areas, argues one expert



**Jo Hutchinson**

Co-director for early years and wellbeing,  
Education Policy Institute

🕒 14 Nov 2025, 5:01



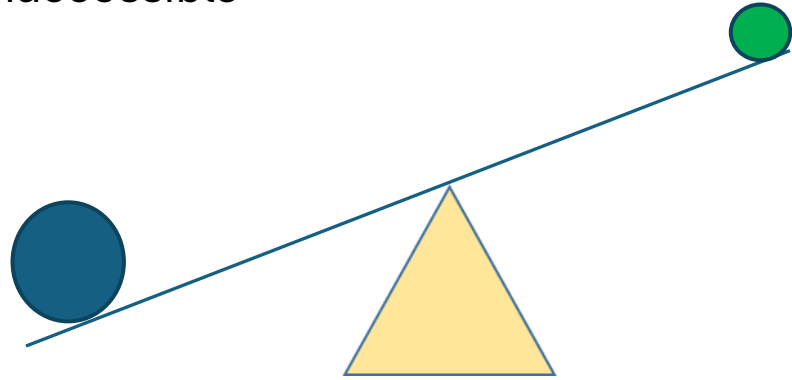
💬 See discussion



# Balancing curriculum accessibility and SEND support

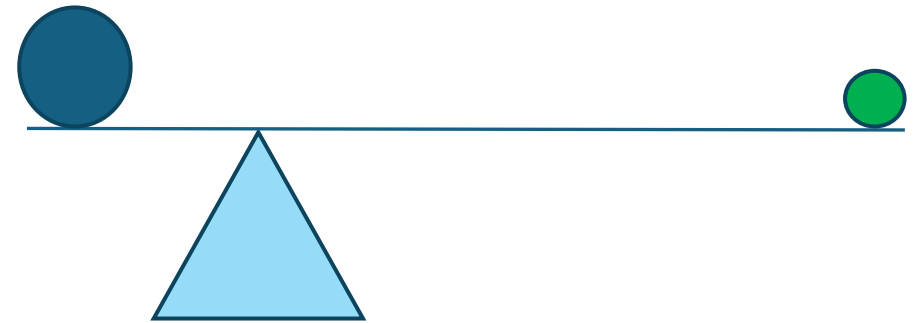
Curriculum  
inaccessible

SEND rises



Curriculum  
accessible

SEND reduces



# Assessment

If we continue to judge success primarily through written exams, the tension between what we value and what we measure will persist.



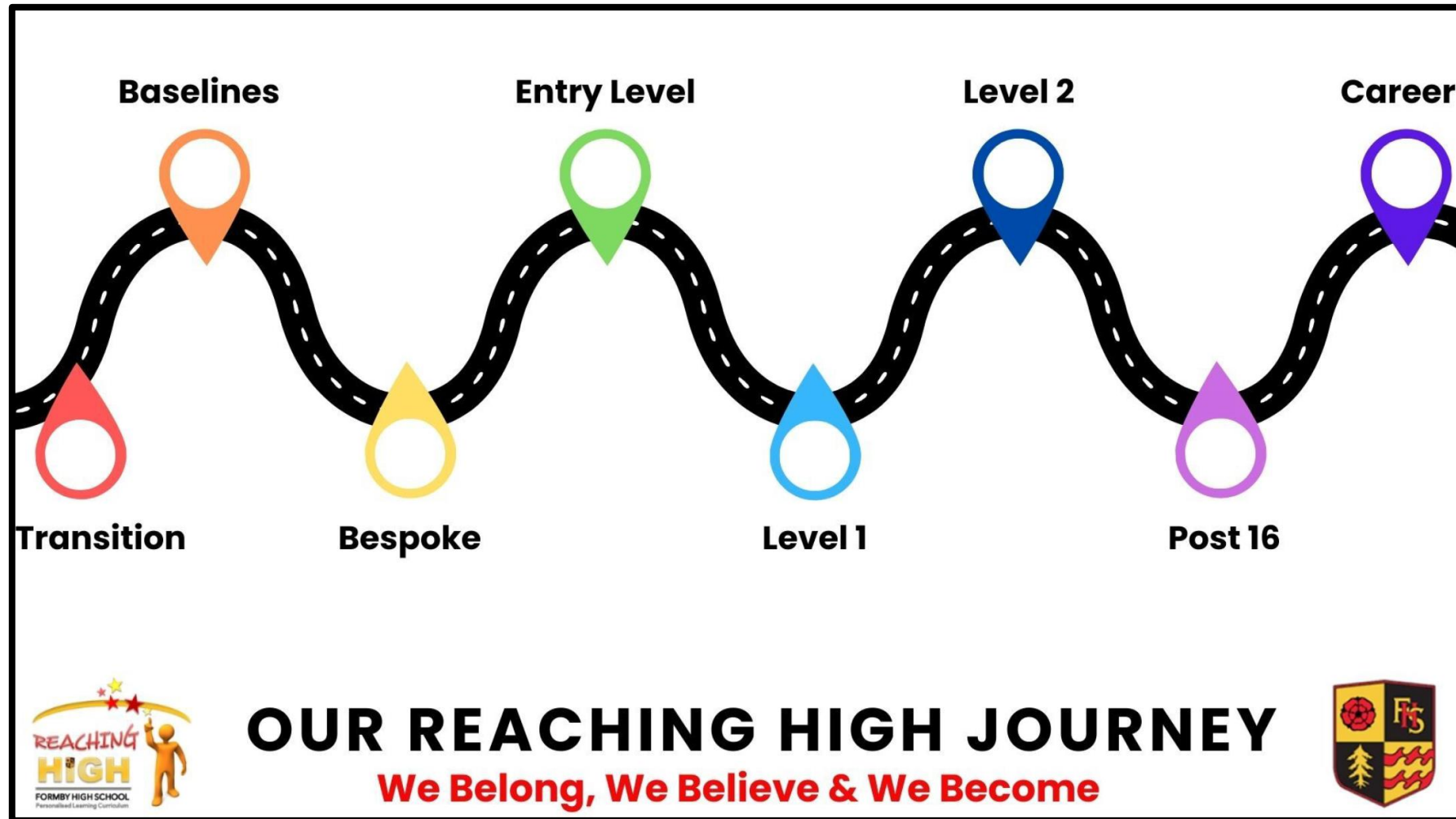
# From policy vision to inclusive reality

Organisations and regulators need to:

- Prioritise accessibility in every reform decision, ensuring that inclusion is not confined to curriculum statements but reflected in assessment frameworks, marking practices, and qualification design.
- Recognise digital learning contexts, including online and blended study, within access arrangements and evidence of “normal way of working.”
- Champion innovation in assessment, piloting digital, modular, and authentic approaches that reflect the diversity of modern learners.

# Support to get it right in practice

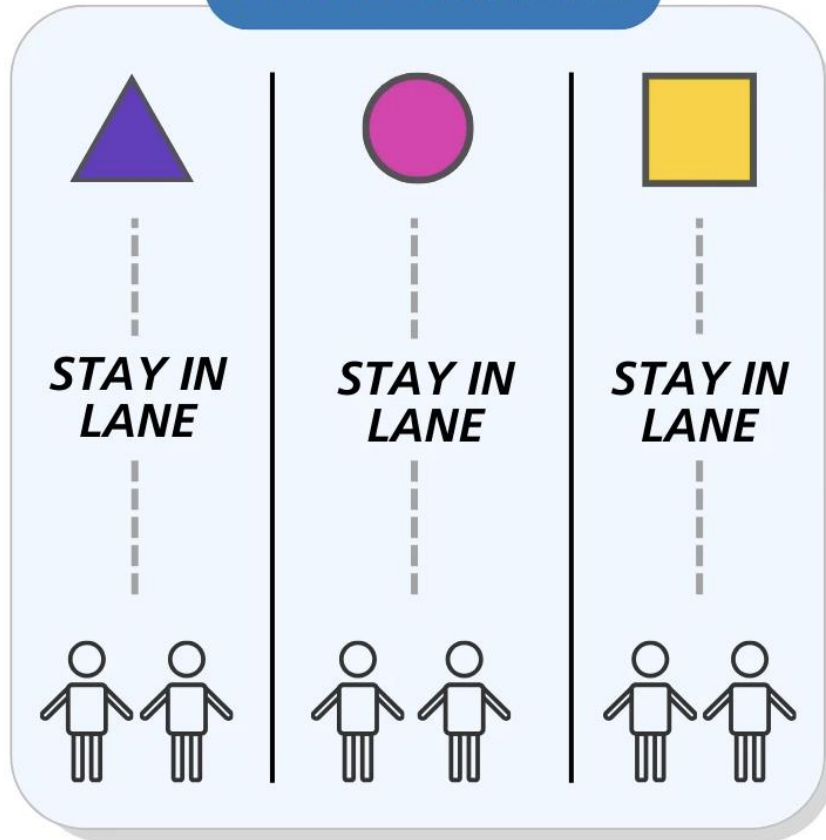
- We know that skilled teachers bring the National Curriculum to life for the pupils in front of them. However, we have heard from teachers about the challenges in doing so for some pupils with SEND.
- We are therefore not looking to change the autonomy of specialist, AP and other settings to appropriately adapt the National Curriculum, and in certain cases in specialist settings, to disapply it.
- However, we are recommending that all settings are provided with guidance and exemplification that supports high-quality curriculum adaptation, to guide schools' work for those pupils with SEND who may need it



- Best interests of the child
- Needs-led curriculum
- Interwoven with mainstream

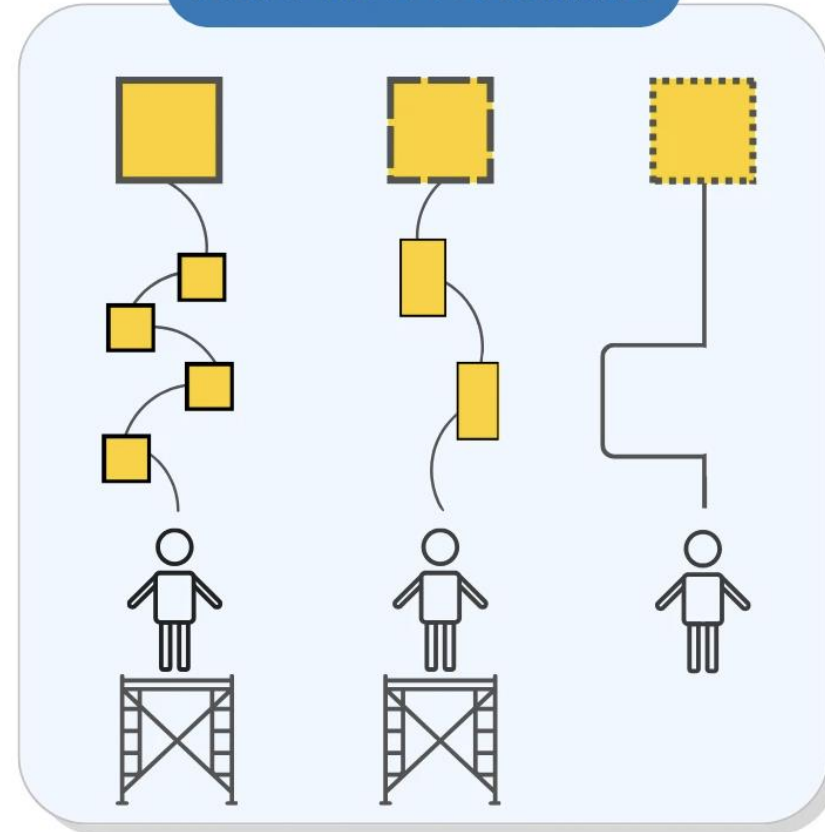
- Nurturing
- Purposeful
- Life Skills

## DIFFERENTIATION



Design different teaching strategies, materials, and activities to accommodate the diverse needs of students within the same classroom.

## ADAPTIVE TEACHING



Ensure all students have access to the curriculum in a way that suits their individual learning preferences and abilities.

| <b>Child 1</b>   | <b>Child 2</b>   | <b>Child 3</b>   | <b>Child 4</b>  | <b>Child 5</b>  | <b>Child 6</b>   |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Visual timetable</b><br><b>Explain changes in routine</b><br><b>Clear expectations</b><br><b>Chunked, dual coded instructions</b><br><b>Behaviour specific praise</b><br><b>Preteaching</b><br><b>Use of scripts for problem-solving</b><br><b>Movement breaks</b><br><b>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</b><br><b>Extra time to complete tasks</b><br><b>Preferential seating</b> | <b>Chunked, dual coded instructions</b><br><b>Behaviour specific praise</b><br><b>Opportunities for overlearning</b><br><b>Preteaching</b><br><b>Movement breaks</b><br><b>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</b><br><b>Extra time to complete tasks</b><br><b>Avoid copying from the board</b><br><b>Preferential seating</b> | <b>Visual timetable</b><br><b>Explain changes in routine</b><br><b>Clear expectations</b><br><b>Chunked, dual coded instructions</b><br><b>Behaviour specific praise</b><br><b>Opportunities for overlearning</b><br><b>Preteaching</b><br><b>Movement breaks</b><br><b>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</b><br><b>Extra time to complete tasks</b><br><b>Preferential seating</b> | <b>Explain changes in routine</b><br><b>Chunked, dual coded instructions</b><br><b>Behaviour specific praise</b><br><b>Opportunities for overlearning</b><br><b>Preteaching</b><br><b>Use of scripts for problem-solving</b><br><b>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</b><br><b>Extra time to complete tasks</b><br><b>Preferential seating</b> | <b>Visual timetable</b><br><b>Chunked, dual coded instructions</b><br><b>Behaviour specific praise</b><br><b>Opportunities for overlearning</b><br><b>Preteaching</b><br><b>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</b><br><b>Extra time to complete tasks</b><br><b>Avoid copying from the board</b><br><b>Preferential seating</b> | <b>Visual timetable</b><br><b>Explain changes in routine</b><br><b>Clear expectations</b><br><b>Chunked, dual coded instructions</b><br><b>Behaviour specific praise</b><br><b>Preteaching</b><br><b>Use of scripts for problem-solving</b><br><b>Movement breaks</b><br><b>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</b><br><b>Extra time to complete tasks</b><br><b>Preferential seating</b> |

| Autism   | Dyslexia   | ADHD  | Perceptual Reasoning Difficulties   | Language Delays   | Anxiety  |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Visual timetable</p> <p>Explain changes in routine</p> <p>Clear expectations</p> <p>Chunked, dual coded instructions</p> <p>Behaviour specific praise</p> <p>Preteaching</p> <p>Use of scripts for problem-solving</p> <p>Movement breaks</p> <p>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</p> <p>Extra time to complete tasks</p> <p>Preferential seating</p> | <p>Chunked, dual coded instructions</p> <p>Behaviour specific praise</p> <p>Opportunities for overlearning</p> <p>Preteaching</p> <p>Movement breaks</p> <p>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</p> <p>Extra time to complete tasks</p> <p>Avoid copying from the board</p> <p>Preferential seating</p> | <p>Visual timetable</p> <p>Explain changes in routine</p> <p>Clear expectations</p> <p>Chunked, dual coded instructions</p> <p>Behaviour specific praise</p> <p>Opportunities for overlearning</p> <p>Preteaching</p> <p>Use of scripts for problem-solving</p> <p>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</p> <p>Extra time to complete tasks</p> <p>Preferential seating</p> | <p>Explain changes in routine</p> <p>Chunked, dual coded instructions</p> <p>Behaviour specific praise</p> <p>Opportunities for overlearning</p> <p>Preteaching</p> <p>Use of scripts for problem-solving</p> <p>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</p> <p>Extra time to complete tasks</p> <p>Preferential seating</p> | <p>Visual timetable</p> <p>Chunked, dual coded instructions</p> <p>Behaviour specific praise</p> <p>Opportunities for overlearning</p> <p>Preteaching</p> <p>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</p> <p>Extra time to complete tasks</p> <p>Avoid copying from the board</p> <p>Preferential seating</p> | <p>Visual timetable</p> <p>Explain changes in routine</p> <p>Clear expectations</p> <p>Chunked, dual coded instructions</p> <p>Behaviour specific praise</p> <p>Preteaching</p> <p>Use of scripts for problem-solving</p> <p>Movement breaks</p> <p>Worked examples/ manipulatives / memory aids</p> <p>Extra time to complete tasks</p> <p>Preferential seating</p> |

# So, how do we enable inclusion at Grange?

**Pupils with additional needs are visible and prioritised**

**Curriculum is planned prioritising for the children with additional needs - what works well for children with SEND works well for all.**

# Chapter 4: Curriculum Development which Enhances Inclusion



What knowledge do you want your pupils to learn and how do you decide which knowledge is valuable?



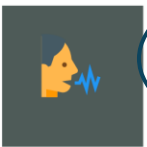
What are the fundamental principles of your curriculum policy? How does it clearly demonstrate that the curriculum is accessible and appropriate for all learners?



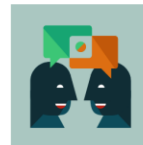
How does the curriculum act as a vehicle for building what it is pupils need to know, but also a tool with which they can better shape their school experience, their relationships with others and the future world they will inhabit? (Kidd, 2020)



What knowledge and skills do your pupils need and how will you sequence this to ensure that they are able to access, engage and retain that which is imparted?



How does the curriculum include opportunities for explicitly taught vocabulary and language to enhance communication?



What does progression look like through the phases and stages of education and across all subjects? How can this be built upon over time to support memory and understanding?



How does the curriculum support progression to the next stage of education, employment, training or independent living?

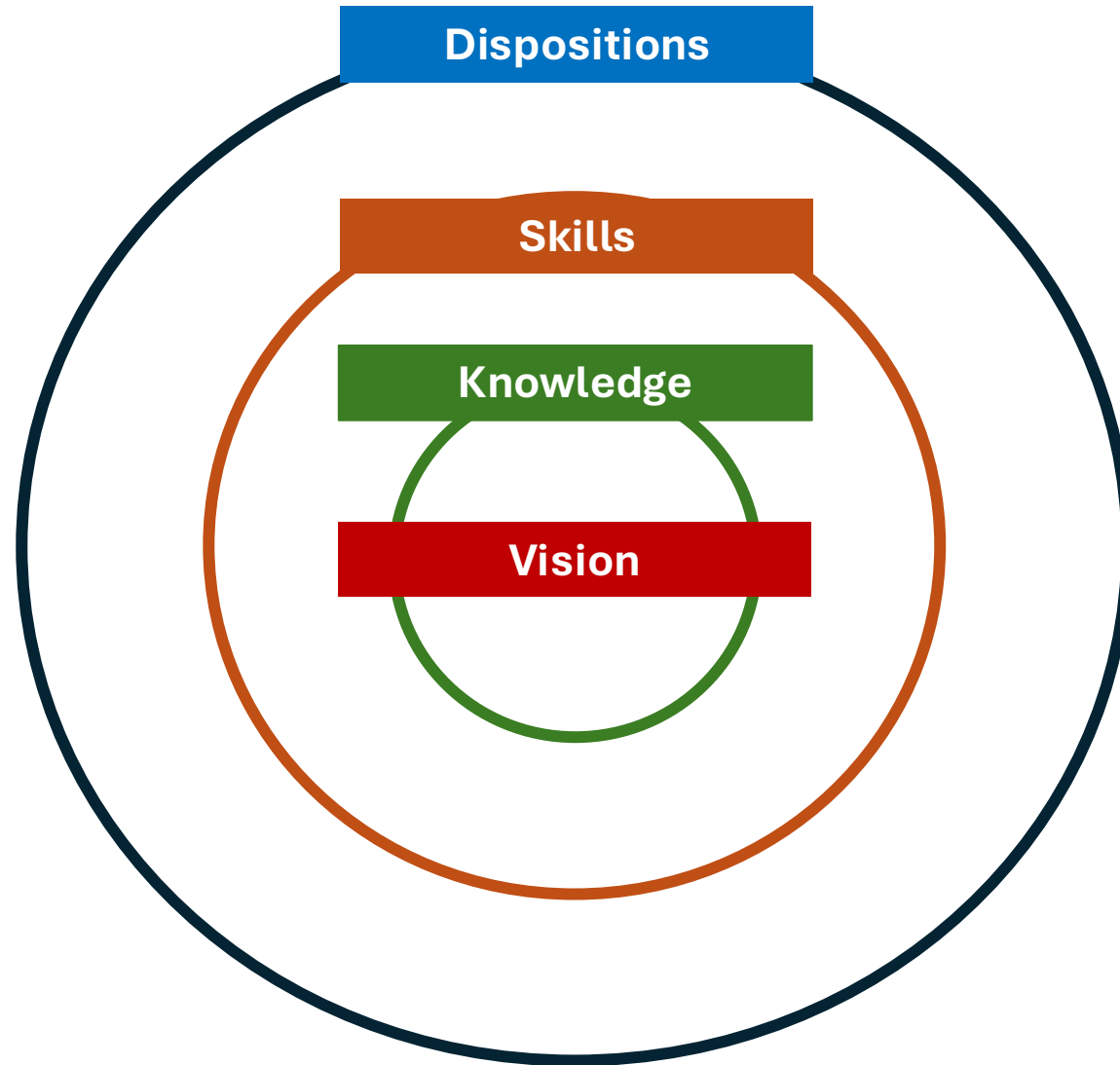


How does pupil voice support the development of the curriculum offer and contribute positively to access, engagement and success from individual starting points?

Teacher confidence, teacher retention,  
teacher agency

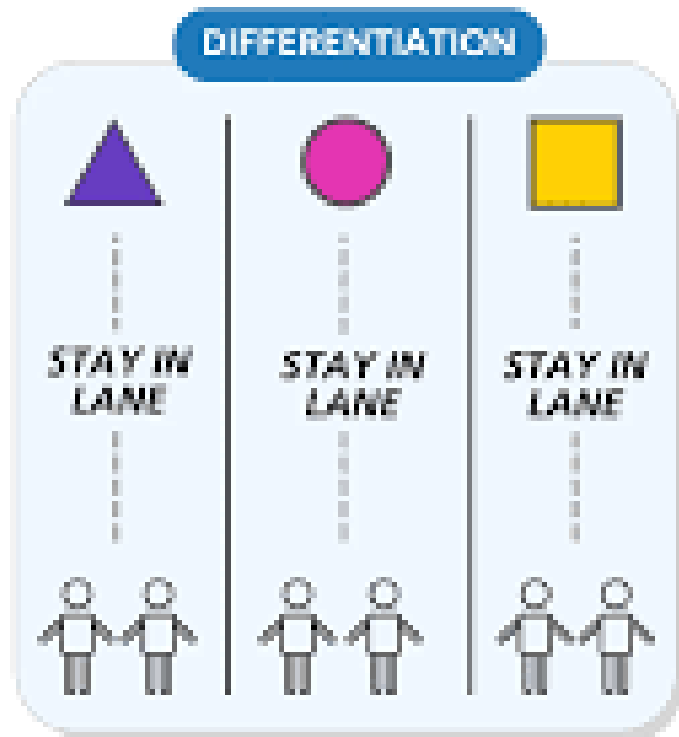


Better decision-making

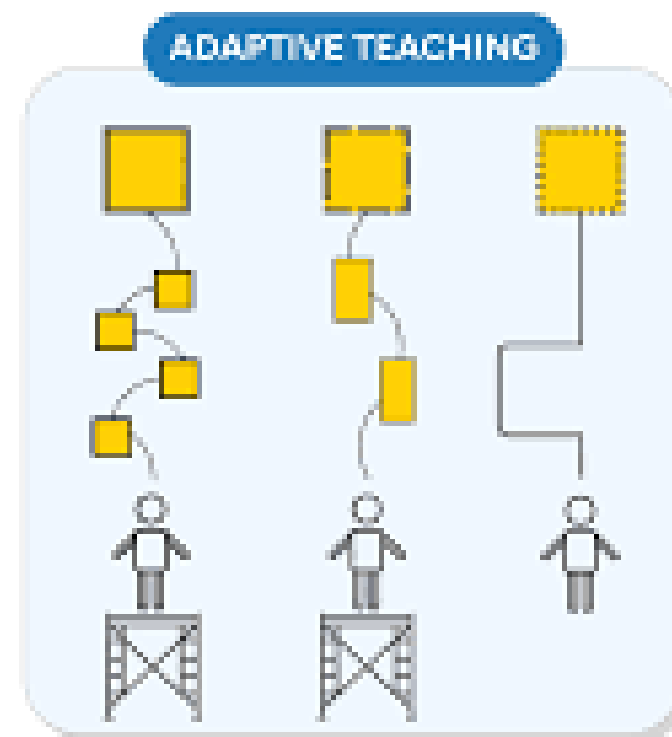




# Why adaptability matters for your pupils with SEND



Design different teaching strategies, materials, and activities to accommodate the diverse needs of students within the same classroom.



Ensure all students have access to the curriculum in a way that suits their individual learning preferences and abilities.

# Better decision making – happier teachers

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FEATURE

## Like soldiers in battle, teachers must be adaptable

The ability to react to unfamiliar challenges in the classroom, particularly relating to pupils' complex needs, should be central to teacher training – not just a bolt-on, argues Margaret Mulholland

13th December 2019, 12:04am



# Why adaptability matters for your teaching

## Flexibility and Adaptability



# Why we should be optimistic about SEND in 2026

There is much riding on the government's upcoming White Paper, but the sector has already shown great innovation in a system designed not to be inclusive, writes Margaret Mulholland  
3rd January 2026, 6:00am

**Margaret Mulholland**



<https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/hope-for-send-support-and-inclusion-in-2026>