



NASS

National Association
of Special Schools

Policy and Research Intern (9 month post)

Recruitment pack

Deadline for applications: **Midday, Friday 6th February 2026**
Interviews held in London: **Tuesday 24th February 2026**

Message from our CEO

Thank you for your interest in joining the team at the National Association of Special Schools (NASS).

NASS is a membership organisation representing special schools across England and Wales. We support, champion and amplify the voices of our members by providing advice, information, events, training and, crucially, a strong and influential voice in national policy discussions. We are committed to helping special schools be centres of excellence and innovation for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).



**Claire Dorer OBE
NASS CEO**

We are a small, dedicated staff team of five, all of whom work remotely. Collaboration, initiative and mutual support are central to how we work and every member of the team plays a meaningful role in driving our impact.

The year ahead is shaping up to be an interesting and busy one for us at NASS. With the Schools White Paper expected in early 2026, this is an exciting moment to be working at the coalface of policy development, analysis and lobbying. In response, we have created this new Policy and Research Intern position to strengthen our capacity at a critical time and to help ensure that special schools continue to play a vital role in supporting children and young people with SEND.

This recruitment pack provides information about NASS, the Policy and Research Intern role and how to apply. We hope it gives you a clear sense of the opportunity to learn, contribute and make a real difference.

If you would like an informal discussion about the role before applying, please contact our Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Mari Davis, by emailing mdavis@nassschools.org.uk to arrange a conversation or ask any questions.

We look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Claire Dorer'.

About NASS

We're a membership organisation representing special schools in England and Wales providing support, advice, information, events, training and a strong national voice for special schools.

Our values

We put NASS members and their learners at the heart of all we do.

We are proactive, outward-facing and collaborative, to continuously improve opportunities and standards for member schools and their learners.



Our vision

Our vision is that every child and young person with SEND receives the education and support they need to achieve their best possible outcomes.

Children and young people with SEND are supported by a diverse range of specialised provision, in and from special schools, with the capacity and quality to meet their needs.



Our mission

We **inform and support our members**, enabling them to deliver improved outcomes for CYP with SEND.

We **represent** our members, influencing policy and practice as the voice of special schools.

We **research and share** approaches that deliver positive outcomes for CYP with SEND.

We **create networks and communities** of schools that enable the growing and sharing of effective practices for schools.



What we do

NASS is a **strong national voice for the special education sector**, bringing together more than 470 schools and organisations. We welcome all types of special schools into our community — including independent special schools, special academies, multi-academy trusts with special schools, non-maintained and maintained special schools.

✓ Be informed

We offer expert advice to members on issues, policies and changes affecting the sector. Members receive regular newsletters, briefings and have access to events and training on topics vital to delivering excellent special needs provision. The team is also available to provide individual guidance to our members.

We unite the NASS community through two annual conferences and host termly special interest groups to foster collaboration and shared expertise.

Through our partnerships with organisations, we offer our members exclusive access to special rates on a wide range of products, support and solutions.

✓ Be recognised

Central to our mission is for special schools to be centres of excellence, delivering and evidencing the best possible outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

We recognise, enable and share excellence from across our membership. This includes investing in initiatives that will provide long-term value and helping members develop and become centres of excellence through bespoke leadership programmes for special schools. We also showcase our members on our website and social media along with celebrating them in the annual NASS Awards.

✓ Be represented

We work hard to ensure our special school community receives proper representation. We are recognised by the Department for Education and Ofsted as the key sector body and seek to influence and push for change on behalf of our members. We respond to all key government consultations, ensuring that the views and concerns of our members are not only raised but also heard.

We're represented on all key working groups and forums including the Special Educational Consortium and National SEND Forum.



About the role

NASS is looking for a **Policy and Research Intern** to join our small team on a nine-month contract

We are seeking a Policy and Research Intern to join our small and dedicated NASS staff team at a pivotal moment for SEND policy.

The anticipated 2026 Schools White Paper will bring significant new work, from analysing policy proposals to briefing our members and supporting our lobbying activity. The intern will play a key role in helping NASS maintain its position as the voice of special schools.

As a new role, this post offers a real opportunity to have an impact on the work of NASS.

Key duties and tasks

The duties and responsibilities set out here give an indication of the role but are not exhaustive. From time to time, the post-holder may be asked to undertake other reasonable tasks, as directed by the Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer or Chief Executive Officer.

Policy, public affairs and research

- Maintain and update public affairs contact lists, including MPs and Peers, and research new opportunities to build relationships with parliamentarians. Work closely with the CEO and Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer to nurture these connections.
- Monitor media and policy developments daily, identifying key issues that may require a NASS response or are of relevance to members.
- Track Hansard and monitor relevant bills as they progress through Parliament, noting MPs and Peers who speak on SEND.
- Attend Select Committees and parliamentary events as required, and support the identification of opportunities for parliamentary engagement, such as written questions.
- Assist the Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer in preparing briefings for NASS members, MPs, and Peers on important sector issues.
- Conduct background and desk-based research as needed.
- Identify and draft compelling case studies from member schools.
- Support the Business Development and Communications Officer with social media activity.
- Draft content for the NASS newsletter.
- Represent NASS at meetings and events as required.

General NASS team duties

- Assist with the organisation and running of events.
- Update the NASS CRM system with relevant data as required.
- Develop and maintain NASS fact sheets and other information resources.
- Provide support to other team members as needed.
- Undertake other reasonable duties as directed by the Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer or CEO.

Person specification

What we are looking for:

- A graduate or postgraduate student seeking experience in policy and public affairs.
- An interest in special education policy (knowledge of the UK education system is helpful but not essential).
- Sympathetic to the aims of NASS and the work of its member schools.
- Proactive, flexible and willing to “muck in.”
- A collaborative team player who is eager to learn and develop.
- Interest in or understanding of the parliamentary process and procedures.
- Eligible to work in the UK.
- Able to take responsibility for managing their own workload as a remote worker.
- Highly self-motivated with initiative.

Skills

- Competent in Microsoft 365 applications (Outlook, Word, Excel, Teams) and design tools such as Canva.
- Able to work effectively from home using initiative and self-management skills.
- Strong organisational and time management skills, able to prioritise competing tasks.
- Good interpersonal skills and able to work collaboratively with colleagues.
- Strong research skills, including desk research of grey literature and academic sources.
- Ability to analyse and interpret data to support lobbying and policy messages.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, able to distil complex information into clear, concise formats.

Qualifications

- Educated to degree level

Personal qualities

- Able to work independently without close supervision while maintaining regular online and occasional face-to-face contact with the team.
- Intellectual curiosity and eagerness to learn.
- Comfortable working across a wide range of tasks.
- Takes pride in delivering high-quality work.
- Seeks opportunities for continuous improvement – for self and for NASS.

Working for NASS

Reporting

The Policy and Research Intern will report to the Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer.

Place of work and travel

The post-holder will primarily work from home. NASS will provide the necessary equipment, such as a computer, broadband connection, and telephone, and will reimburse related costs. Suitable workspace at home is required.

The role will involve regular travel, particularly to Westminster, so ideally the post-holder should be based within one hour of central London. There will also be occasional travel elsewhere, for example to the annual conference, team meetings and other events. All travel and subsistence costs will be covered, and travel time will count as working hours.

Contract

This is a nine-month paid internship at the National Living Wage (£12.71 per hour), with the possibility of becoming permanent in the future, subject to performance and the organisation's financial position.

Hours

This is **a part-time role, working three days a week**, 7.5 hours per day (22.5 hours per week).

The preferred working days are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, though some flexibility may be possible.

Please note that Fridays cannot be accommodated, as they are non-Parliamentary days.

Pension

NASS will either make a contribution of 10% of salary into an employee's private personal pension or the NASS organisational pension scheme.

Annual leave

25 days per year pro rata, plus bank holidays.

How to apply

Deadline for applications is **Midday Friday 6th February**

Interviews will be held in London on **Tuesday 24th February**

NASS is an inclusive organisation. We strive to create a diverse and inclusive team, with a wide range of skills and expertise to ensure that we can support our members' needs, represent them effectively, and make the greatest impact at policy level.

You do not need to have a background in SEND to apply for this role.

If you would like an informal discussion about the role before applying, please contact our **Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Mari Davis**, by emailing mdavis@nassschools.org.uk to arrange a conversation or ask any questions.

Your application

Please send your CV along with a covering letter to recruitment@nassschools.org.uk, explaining how you meet the requirements of the job description and person specification.

In your covering letter, please include a real-life example of a time when you undertook research and presented the findings to others.

Applications submitted without a covering letter will not be considered.

References

Please include the contact details of two people who would be willing to act as referees in support of your application.

Closing date

Midday on Friday 6th February 2026

Interview

Successful applicants will be notified **by 13th February** if they have been shortlisted for interview. If you have not heard from us by 18th February, unfortunately your application has not been successful on this occasion.

Interviews will take place in London on Tuesday 24th February. The venue and further details will be provided to shortlisted candidates. Candidates will be expected to prepare a short presentation for the interview, with additional information supplied upon invitation.

Feedback

Due to the high volume of applications, we are only able to provide feedback to applicants who are interviewed.

Use of AI in your application

If you have used AI as part of your application, we ask that you declare this, specifying which AI tools you used and for what purpose. Any use of AI should be to support and enhance your own work, helping you demonstrate your skills and experience. It should not be used to create a persona that is not authentically you.