



**Every Need Met.
Every Opportunity Given.**

Four asks. One ambition:

A SEND system where every child can thrive

ASK ONE No Delays. No Detours. No Denials.

Protect EHCP rights and ensure timely access to specialist education

Every child and young person with SEND deserves access to the right education, in the right place, at the right time. For many children with complex needs, that means specialist provision in a special school. Yet too many families face long delays, repeated obstacles and stressful uncertainty before they can secure the support and placement their child needs.

NASS supports reform that improves inclusion and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. However, we are deeply concerned that current reform proposals could weaken established rights, create new barriers to specialist provision, and delay access to education for children whose needs cannot be met elsewhere.

The challenge

The proposed reliance on Specialist Provision Packages risks creating a new national gatekeeping mechanism for children with the most complex and overlapping needs. Complex SEND rarely fits neatly into standardised categories. Children may require highly individualised combinations of education, therapy, care, health input, environmental adaptation and specialist staffing. If packages become the basis for EHCP entitlement and placement decisions, there is a real risk that support is defined by what the system has pre-set, rather than by a full assessment of the child. This could narrow access to special schools, weaken parental preference and reduce the practical force of Tribunal rights.

Families already face long waits, adversarial processes and shortages of specialist capacity; adding a further eligibility test or package-matching stage could increase delay and uncertainty. Reform must not replace individual legal entitlement with administrative templates. For children whose needs cannot be met elsewhere, access to specialist provision must remain needs-led, enforceable and timely.

We want the Government to:



Protect EHCP enforceability and parental preference via the SEND Tribunal.



Ensure new placement pathways do not reduce access to specialist provision.



Ensure SEND reforms reduce waiting times rather than add additional stages that delay access to support.



Introduce safeguards against systems that deny support.

Why special schools matter

Special schools exist because some children require highly specialised teaching, therapeutic support, adapted environments and staffing expertise that cannot always be replicated elsewhere.

For children with the most complex learning difficulties, autism, sensory needs, physical disabilities or social, emotional and mental health needs, specialist provision is often best placed to meet needs effectively.

Conversely, when children spend months or years in unsuitable provision while awaiting assessment, appeal outcomes or placement decisions, opportunities for progress are lost and needs often escalate.

NASS schools see every day what happens when children access the right support early:

- ✓ attendance improves;
- ✓ anxiety reduces;
- ✓ families regain confidence;
- ✓ behaviour linked to unmet need decreases; and
- ✓ children make meaningful progress academically, socially and emotionally.

Our concern about SEND Reform

NASS is concerned that future reforms could:

- weaken the enforceability of EHCPs and parental rights;
- introduce additional stages, gateways or local processes that delay access to specialist provision;
- encourage placement decisions driven by system capacity rather than individual need;
- make special schools a placement of last resort rather than a timely and effective option where evidence demonstrates need.

The recent Education Select Committee Inquiry into SEND warned against strengthening inclusion by diluting legal entitlements and highlighted the importance of maintaining parental confidence and access to specialist support.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has similarly warned that reform must not simply reduce support or legal protections without providing effective alternatives.

We are concerned that the proposed change to EHCP will result in diluted legal safeguards and reduce access to needs led access to support.

Our message to the new Prime Minister

Children with complex SEND get only one chance at childhood and one chance at education.

Reform must not create new barriers between children and the support they need.

No Delays. No Detours. No Denials.

Protect EHCP rights. Protect access to specialist education.



NASS is the membership association for all types of special schools in England and Wales. We provide support, advice, information, events, training and a strong national voice.

We're a growing community with over 500 schools and organisations in membership.

If you have any questions or would like further information please contact:

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