

Why is information recorded in categories?

The Department of Education (DE) require common special educational needs (SEN) categories in order to provide accurate information about the numbers of pupils in Northern Ireland with different types of SEN for whom special educational provision is being made.

In law, a pupil is described as having special educational needs if they have a *significantly greater difficulty* in learning than the majority of children their age which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Special educational provision means educational provision which is *additional to, or otherwise different from, the* educational provision which children of a similar age receive in an ordinary school.

A pupil also has SEN if they have a *disability* that calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

How have DE changed the categories?

DE have introduced SEN categories which all schools use when placing children on their SEN Register. The categories have been revised to ensure that the most appropriate category for SEN pupils is recorded on the School Information Management System (SIMS). The DE have also introduced a new Medical Register for schools to record a pupil's medical diagnosis.

Which Register records pupils with a medical diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

Pupils with a diagnosis of ASD or ADHD are recorded on the Medical Register. Schools will also think carefully whether or not a pupil with a medical diagnosis of ASD or ADHD also have associated SEN. Pupils who require special educational provision to be made for their diagnosis are also recorded on the SEN Register.

How do schools decide which SEN category to use?

It is the school's decision to place a child on the SEN Register. A pupil on the SEN Register has a special educational need that requires special educational provision to be made for them. Many pupils with SEN have more than one type of need.

How do schools decide which Medical category to use?

Teachers or educational psychologists are **not qualified** for diagnosing a pupil's medical or physical condition. Schools record a pupil on the medical register from evidence provided by the parent or by the Education Authority (EA) or Health and Social care Trust (HSCT).

A pupil can be recorded on both the SEN Register and Medical Register if they have both a medical need and also require special educational provision.

Private/External Reports

Your child may have had a private diagnosis of a medical condition and/or SEN. The final assessment and/or report provided to you may be helpful in informing the work being carried out in school and should therefore be shared with them.

The school will take cognisance of external reports but will not respond to recommendations if they do not match the professional judgement of teaching staff within the school.



The school will consider any request to allow a private assessor into the school to undertake an observation but is not obliged to do so. This is at the discretion of the principal and each situation needs to be considered on an individual basis.