

Shropshire
Council

Accessibility Strategy

For children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Shropshire

Vision and Principles

Our ambition for children and young people with SEND is the same as for all children and young people in Shropshire: to be supported to thrive, achieve and prepare for adulthood through high-quality, joined-up services. This plan is rooted in the principles of the SEND reforms: early identification, partnership working, inclusion, and a clear focus on outcomes across education, health and care.

In practical sufficiency terms, this means:

- **Planning ahead**, using evidence and forecasts to shape provision rather than responding only when pressure becomes acute.
- **Building capacity in the system**, particularly within mainstream settings, so that appropriate needs can be met earlier and closer to home.
- **Growing specialist provision strategically**, ensuring local capacity expands in line with need and reduces reliance on distant placements.
- **Using resources wisely**, so capital investment supports long-term revenue sustainability and better outcomes

1.0 Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation. The Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the 'general duty') that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and academies (including Free Schools) and which extends to all protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011.

The duty has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act,
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it,
- foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

All schools have duties under the Equality Act 2010 towards individual disabled children and young people and must publish;

- An SEN Information Report/Policy
- A Medicine in School Policy
- An Access Plan
- Information on Admissions

Requirements for local authorities to put in place an accessibility strategy are specified in schedule 10 of the Act: Accessibility for disabled pupils.

Schedule 10 says:

An accessibility strategy is a strategy for, over a prescribed period —

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums;
- improving the physical environment of the schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools;
- improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The delivery of information must be:

- within a reasonable time;
- in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils' disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.

Definition of Disability

A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Physical or mental impairment includes learning difficulties, mental health conditions, medical conditions and hidden impairments such as dyslexia,

autism and speech and language and communication impairments (Equality Act 2010).

Definition of SEND

A child or young person has a special educational need if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for specialist education provision to be made for him or her (SEND Code of Practice 2014).

2. Local Context

Shropshire is a large, predominantly rural authority with a dispersed population and a mixed education system comprising maintained schools, academies, special schools, resourced provisions and SEN units, and post-16 providers.

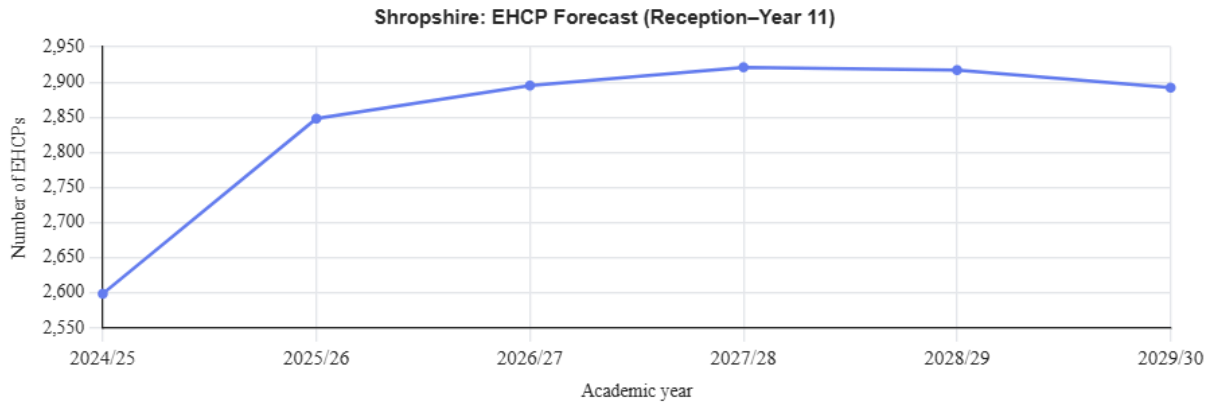
Rurality shapes sufficiency in very practical ways. Distance and transport are significant considerations for families and services. Specialist provision cannot always be delivered at scale in every locality, and workforce recruitment and retention can be more challenging in some areas. These features do not reduce demand — they change how the system must respond to meet need equitably and sustainably.

At the same time, Shropshire has a strong commitment to inclusion and to enabling children and young people with SEND to be educated **as close to home as possible**, where this meets their needs and supports positive outcomes. This plan sets out how that commitment will be translated into capacity, provision and delivery.

3. Understanding Current and Emerging Need

3.1 Growth in EHCPs

The number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in Shropshire has continued to rise and is forecast to remain high over the medium term.



Forecasts indicate:

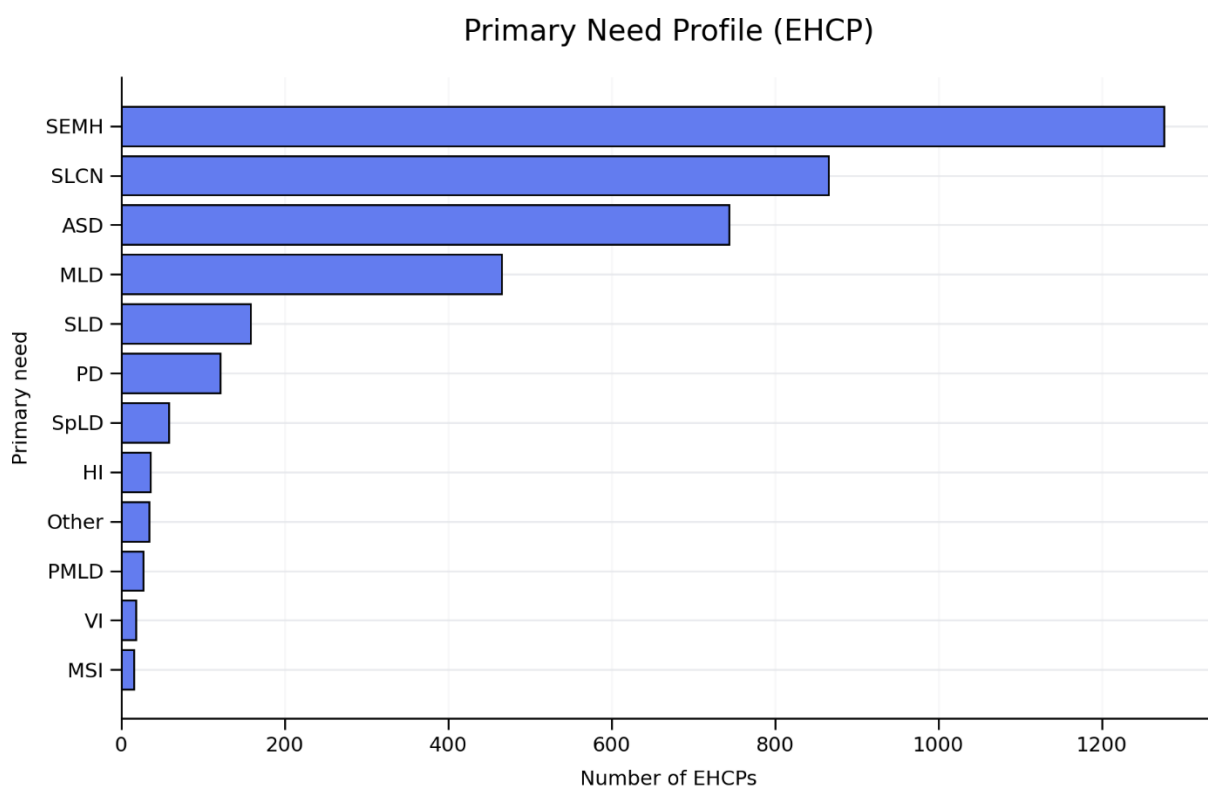
- EHCP totals of approximately **2,599 in 2024/25**
- Rising to around **2,921 by 2027/28**
- Remaining close to **2,892 by 2029/30**

This reflects sustained demand rather than a short-term spike. It also signals the importance of system planning that goes beyond immediate capacity and focuses on long-term resilience — including mainstream capability, specialist sufficiency and post-16 pathways.

3.2 Primary Need Profile

The primary needs profile for children and young people with EHCPs in Shropshire is led by:

- **Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)**
- **Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)**
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**



Together, these needs account for the majority of EHCPs, with a further cohort of children with cognition and learning needs and a smaller but highly complex group with physical, sensory and multiple needs. This profile underpins the approach to sufficiency: building mainstream capability for the highest-prevalence needs while ensuring specialist provision is available locally for children whose needs require a specialist environment.

Taken together, the demand profile, distribution of need and primary need characteristics set out above point to a clear sufficiency challenge: pressure is concentrated early, complexity is increasing, and the system must respond in a way that strengthens local capacity rather than relying on reactive solutions. The priorities set out in Section 7 translate this analysis into a focused delivery programme, aligning mainstream development, specialist expansion and financial sustainability into a single, coherent response.

4. Current Provision and Sufficiency Position

4.1 Mainstream Provision

Most children and young people with SEND in Shropshire are educated in mainstream settings. As a result, mainstream schools sit at the centre of the sufficiency system: if mainstream provision is confident, consistent and well

supported, fewer children will need to escalate to high-cost or distant provision, and more children will access stable education in their community

Key challenges include:

- Increasing complexity of need within mainstream cohorts
- Rising demand for top-up funding and specialist input
- Pressure on attendance and exclusions for pupils with SEMH needs

Strengthening mainstream capacity is therefore not an optional improvement; it is a core sufficiency strategy. It supports better experiences for children and families and is also central to financial sustainability. There are currently 151 maintained schools and academies across Shropshire, serving a predominantly rural county with a mix of market towns and dispersed communities. Ensuring equitable access to education for children and young people with SEND across this geography requires a strong focus on local provision and inclusive mainstream practice.

Shropshire's specialist estate currently provides approximately **835 places** across special schools and mainstream resourced provisions/SEN units.

Resourced Provision (SEND Hubs)

Shropshire has developed a network of resourced provisions and SEN units, often referred to as SEND hubs, located within mainstream schools. These provisions support children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans who may find it difficult to access a full-time mainstream curriculum without additional specialist support.

Current schools hosting SEND hubs or resourced provision include:

- Bowbrook Primary School (Shrewsbury)
- Cleobury Mortimer Primary School
- Ellesmere Primary School
- Kettlemere Resource Provision at Lakelands Academy (Ellesmere)
- Lacon Childe School
- Morda CE Primary School (Oswestry)
- Nesscliffe Primary School
- Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School
- Sir John Talbot's School (Whitchurch)
- St Lawrence CE Primary School (Church Stretton)
- St Mary's Blue Coat CE Primary School (Bridgnorth)
- Whittington Primary School (Oswestry)
- Whitchurch Infant School

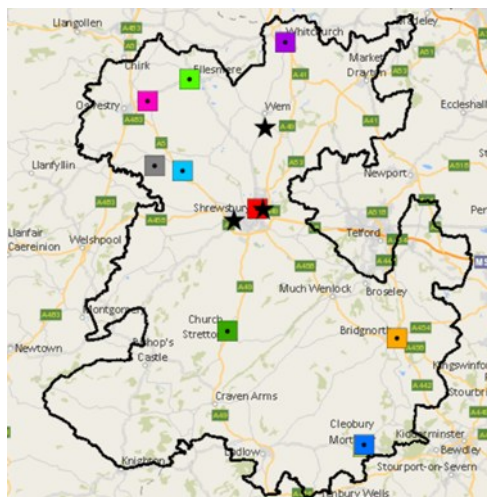
Provision models vary to reflect need and local context, including resourced provision, SEN units and blended models, supporting inclusion while providing specialist environments where required.

Special Schools

Shropshire has three maintained special schools providing specialist education for children and young people with more complex needs:

- Severndale Specialist Academy
- Keystone Academy (opened 2023)
- Woodlands School

These schools form a critical part of the local SEND system and work closely with mainstream settings and the local authority.



This map illustrates the current pattern of specialist provision and highlights the geographic challenges inherent in a large rural authority.

5.0 Information, Advice, Guidance and the Local Offer

SEND Independent Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

The Shropshire Local Offer contains information covering a range of matters relating to Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) including education, health, social care, personalisation, personal budgets along with benefits and leisure.

It is there to support children, young people who have, or may have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) aged 0-25 years who are living within Shropshire. Support is also available to their parents, carers, their wider family and those working with families.

The local offer provides information to navigate systems and processes so that parents can play an active role in decision making about matters relating to their or their children's health, education, social care to support and empower them in meeting their child's needs and promoting self-advocacy.

The Local Offer sets out on in one place services and support available for children and young people, aged 0-25 years, with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) and their families from education, health and social care services.

More information is also available on the Local Offer Website [The SEND local offer | Shropshire Council](#)

6.0 Increasing Access to the Curriculum

Schools are responsible for providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all children and young people, to include the wider curriculum (including after school clubs) for children and young people with SEND.

Schools must also make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and equipment required by disabled children and young people, to prevent them being put at a substantial disadvantage. These duties require thought to be given in advance in terms of what disabled children and young people might require and what adjustments might need to be made to prevent that disadvantage. Schools also have wider duties to prevent discrimination, to promote equality and to foster good relations.

Shropshire Council will:

- Support schools to improve access to the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities by offering specialist advice and guidance about responding to individual needs of pupils
- Provide guidance on removing barriers to learning and the development of a graduated approach that will help all schools to meet the needs of their pupils.
- Delivering training to staff

7.0 Improving the Physical Environment

Schools must consider the needs of individual pupils or groups when planning improvements to the environment. In addition they have a duty to consider reasonable adjustments for individual disabled pupils and disabled pupils generally. However, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments.

There is a requirement on schools to notify the Council of access needs, and parents need to identify on school admission forms that their child has physical access requirements. There will be a presumption against agreeing a school place until discussions (or formal consultation if an Education Health Care Plan is in place)

have taken place with the school about its capacity to accommodate the needs of the relevant pupil. Although both the school and Council will use their 'best endeavours' to enable a placement according to parental preference, it is not always possible.

Consideration should be given to whether adaptations at the school provide the best value for money as well as meeting the pupils 'needs'. There may be another school locally that is already accessible and can adequately suit the needs of the child.

Shropshire Council will:

- One of the aims of the schools capital programme is to improve the standard of physical accessibility alongside planned capital investment for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools.
- Where there is a new build, extension or refurbishment, it is expected that works will incorporate any access facilities needed for existing pupils, as well as, in accordance with its statutory responsibilities, anticipate the needs of future pupils (e.g. level access, hygiene/changing provision).
- The Council is committed to developing the range of provision available across the district and recognises that investment in buildings supports improved access to a full curriculum for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and will utilise the SEN funding allocation to help achieve this goal.
- There is an expectation that small capital adaptations will be funded from the school's own revenue budget. For more complex and costly works there will need to be conversations between the setting and the SEND / Capital works teams at the council to best understand the required need / ask
- Once the Council has funded an adaptation, its upkeep and maintenance is then the school's responsibility.
- If a pupil moves and the school no longer needs a particular facility (e.g. a hygiene or physiotherapy room) the Governing Body must consult the council about any change or removal; if removed and subsequently the facility is needed again, this re-instatement will then be the financial responsibility of the school's Governing Body.

Adaptations in Academies:

- Academy Schools are independent of the Council and are funded directly by Central Government.
Advice from Education Funding Agency is that councils should discuss the placement of a pupil with additional needs with an Academy prior to the issue of an Education Health and Care Plan and that the issue of costs and funding should form part of that discussion. The Council will work with Academies where capital funding is a significant barrier to placing a pupil.

8.0 Improving Access to Information

Schools have a duty to ensure that all written information normally provided to its pupils is available to disabled pupils, within a reasonable timeframe.

School websites must be reviewed annually.

In addition, the Council will:

- Further develop and improve our Local Offer through consultation and engagement with children and young people with SEND and their families.
- Liaise with partners in schools, social care and health professionals, to ensure that there is a consistent and equitable method of securing technological aids, e.g. Alternative and Augmentative Communication Aids
- Continue to work across schools and settings to make information available through alternative methods and formats in partnership with our sensory specialist provisions
- Continue to offer impartial information, guidance and support through independent partners.

9.0 Implementation and Review

This strategy covers period May 2026 – March 2028. The Council will support schools in implementing the strategy and will continue to work with key partners through the SEND Strategic Partnership Board.

The SEND Strategic Partnership Board will oversee the delivery of the Strategy as part of their overall strategic role. This group has representation from education, social care, health, the voluntary sector and parents/carers.

The SEND Strategic Partnership Board will also review the strategy annually, to ensure it remains fit for purpose.