

# PROSPECTS

Job profile

## Special educational needs teacher

**If you aspire to help children with complex needs achieve their potential a career as a special educational needs teacher would suit you**

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As a special educational needs (SEN) teacher you'll work with children and young people who need extra support, or require an advanced programme of learning in order to reach their full educational potential.

You may work with individuals who have physical disabilities, sensory impairments (i.e. hearing or visual), speech and language difficulties, learning difficulties such as dyslexia, conditions such as autism, social, emotional and mental health needs, or have a combination of these difficulties.

You may also work with gifted and talented individuals.

A key aspect of working in this field is identifying individual needs and being responsible for creating a safe, stimulating and supportive learning environment.

## Responsibilities

As a SEN teacher, you'll need to:

- teach either individuals or small groups of pupils within, or outside the class
- prepare lessons and resources
- mark and assess work
- develop and adapt conventional teaching methods to meet the individual needs of pupils
- use special equipment and facilities, such as audiovisual materials and computers to stimulate interest in learning
- use specialist skills, such as teaching Braille to pupils with visual impairments or sign language and lip reading to students who have hearing impairments
- collaborate with the classroom teacher to define appropriate activities for the pupils in relation to the curriculum
- assess children who have long or short-term learning difficulties and work with colleagues to identify individual pupils' special needs
- work with the head teacher and governing body to ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) are met in terms of reasonable adjustments and access arrangements
- liaise with other professionals, such as social workers, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and educational psychologists
- work closely with parents and guardians
- organise learning outside the classroom in activities such as community visits, school outings or sporting events
- assist in severely disabled pupils' personal care/medical needs
- carry out administrative tasks, including updating and maintaining records of pupils' progress
- attend statutory annual reviews or other related meetings, such as Looked After Child (LAC) reviews, regarding students with a SEN, which may involve reviewing Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans
- attend in-service training
- manage behaviour.

## Salary

- New entrants to teaching in England, Wales and Northern Ireland begin on the main salary scale, which starts from £22,467, rising incrementally to £33,160. Teachers working within inner and outer London areas, as well as the London fringe area, re-

ceive additional allowances.

- A SEN teacher's starting point depends on the employer, qualifications and level of responsibility. Consideration may be given to pre-entry experience.
- An additional allowance, ranging from £2,064 to £4,075, is awarded for having responsibility for SEN children.
- After gaining experience and expertise, teachers who reach the top of the main scale can apply to be assessed to progress to the upper pay scale. This ranges from £35,571 to £38,250.
- In Scotland, the main pay scale ranges from £22,416 to £35,763. There are additional allowances for working in remote schools and on distant islands. After gaining experience and expertise, Scottish teachers who reach the top of the Scottish main scale can apply to receive chartered teacher status. Chartered teachers earn up to £43,845. This is open to SEN teachers as well as mainstream teachers. For full details of the Scottish teachers' pay scale, see the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) (<http://www.snct.org.uk/>).

Income data from the Department for Education and SNCT. Figures are intended as a guide only.

## Working hours

SEN teachers generally work a school day; from around 8.30am to 3.30pm, Monday to Friday, during term time. This may vary depending on the school and which part of the country you live in. In state schools in England and Wales, you'll work 39 weeks a year in school. Half a day per week is given to teachers for planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.

Many teachers work outside school hours to cover responsibilities such as preparing lessons, reviewing progress and writing reports, marking, attending meetings and preparing for parents evenings. Some teachers may also be involved in out-of-school activities, such as trips and sporting activities.

If you work in Scotland, working hours for SEN teachers are the same as for mainstream teachers. The standard working week is 35 hours. There is a maximum of 22 and a half hours' classroom contact time for all teachers in Scotland, with the rest accounted for by collaborative working and continuing professional development (CPD).

You can do part-time or supply work if you are registered with the local authority (LA) or a supply agency.

Career break opportunities may be available, depending on your post and the employer.

## What to expect

- Self-employment or freelance work is sometimes possible. You may be able to supplement your income through private home tuition or consultancy work.
- SEN teachers are employed in all areas of the UK.
- Some SEN teachers are based in one school and have little occasion to travel, but you may attend meetings, training and conferences. Occasional residential trips may occur, but overnight absence from home is not generally required.
- If you are based in a team outside schools, you will need to travel to a variety of schools.

## Qualifications

To become a special educational needs (SEN) teacher in a mainstream school, qualified teacher status (QTS) is required in England and Wales or the teaching qualification (TQ) in Scotland.

While most independent schools also require QTS status, this is not always essential.

QTS status is generally achieved by completing one of the following qualifications:

- Bachelor of Education (BEd)
- BA or BSc with QTS
- Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) ([/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/teacher-training-and-education/pgce](#))
- School-centred initial teacher training (SCITT)
- Teach First (England and Wales) - a two-year programme including a PGCE, where top graduates are placed in challenging schools
- School Direct (England and Wales) - a school-based training route with the expectation that participants will go on to work in

the school or partnership of schools in which they trained. In most, but not all cases, a PGCE accredited by a higher education institution (HEI) will be awarded.

In Scotland, the TQ is usually achieved by completing the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE).

There is a special educational needs element to all initial teacher training (ITT) courses. Qualified teachers can also undertake additional training to teach pupils with special educational needs.

Entry is not possible with a HND only. In England and Wales, candidates who have successfully completed two years of higher education - if you have a HND you would qualify - may opt to take a shortened two-year degree with QTS. You can apply for this route via Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) (<https://www.ucas.com/>).

Specific qualifications are required to teach pupils with hearing, visual or multi-sensory impairments. To find out which universities offer qualifications in these specialised areas, as well as further details on entry requirements and routes to becoming a qualified teacher, see [teacher training and education \(/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/teacher-training-and-education\)](/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/teacher-training-and-education).

You will also need an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to work with children or young adults in the UK. Without a DBS check, you are not allowed to work with children unsupervised.

An application for a DBS check needs to be completed before beginning a course that leads to QTS. In the first instance, this will be through the training body. This check will be repeated by any subsequent employer once training is complete. For more information, see the [Disclosure and Barring Service \(https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service).

For criminal record checks in Scotland and Northern Ireland see:

- [Disclosure Scotland \(http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/\)](http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/)
- [Access Northern Ireland \(AccessNI\) \(https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/accessni-criminal-record-checks\)](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/accessni-criminal-record-checks)

Mature entry into SEN teaching is common, as teachers generally have several years' experience before entering the profession. However, some schools do recruit newly qualified teachers.

Search for PGCE courses (<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses-results?keyword=PGCE>).

## Skills

You will need to show:

- commitment to working with pupils with special educational needs
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- initiative and problem-solving skills
- the ability to manage confrontation and challenging behaviour
- team working skills
- organisational skills
- an observant and responsive approach
- flexibility - it is important to be able to respond to the needs of the children and adapt or change plans accordingly
- a positive, energetic and enthusiastic outlook
- patience, understanding and empathy with pupils and parents
- a sense of humour.

## Employers

You are most likely to be employed by a local education authority (LEA). Many SEN teachers work in mainstream schools, either in the classrooms or within specialist units, depending on the inclusion policy of the school.

The specialist units provide support for pupils with autism or physical and sensory impairments.

As a SEN teacher, you can also find employment in special schools throughout the UK, helping students with learning needs arising from physical difficulties, learning difficulties or behavioural problems.

There are also opportunities to work in:

- community homes
- further education colleges with special education units
- hospital schools
- independent schools
- learning support teams - these work from a base and travel to a cluster of schools
- pupil referral units (PRUs)
- youth custody centres.

You can take on supply work or arrange direct supply work through the schools themselves.

Some SEN teachers may find work as private tutors. There are opportunities to work abroad as well. SEN teachers often undertake voluntary work abroad, and there are opportunities to go on exchange programmes.

Look for job vacancies at:

- EduStaff (<http://www.edustaff.co.uk/>)
- Local Government Jobs (<http://www.lgjobs.com/>)
- Times Educational Supplement Jobs (<http://www.tes.com/jobs/>)
- Local press
- Online recruitment agencies
- Vacancy lists from some local education authorities (LEAs)
- Vacancy lists on council websites.

## Professional development

All newly qualified teachers (NQTs) have to complete a one-year statutory induction, including if you start teaching in special educational needs (SEN) as your first position after qualifying.

You can undertake further postgraduate professional development. Options include certificates as well as a diploma or Masters in special educational needs.

Course content and titles vary according to the type of special educational need or disability being covered. Full and part-time courses are offered. In-service training is also available. Many local education authorities provide SEN courses for teachers working in the field.

There are additional mandatory requirements for SEN teachers if you specialise in teaching pupils with visual, hearing or multi-sensory impairment.

These qualifications are available only from specific institutions approved by the Department for Education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>) and can be completed full time or part time. Full details of the requirements and course providers can be obtained from the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mandatory-qualifications-specialist-teachers>).

The ability to use sign language is essential if you wish to work with hearing impaired pupils, as is Braille for teachers of pupils with visual impairments.

Courses are available for qualified teachers to teach pupils with other special educational needs. Some of these focus generally on special educational needs, while other courses are more specific, focusing on a particular learning difficulty, such as dyslexia or autism. These courses are generally part time, lasting several months.

All teachers in Scotland have a contractual commitment to undertake 35 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) per year. More information can be obtained from the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) (<http://www.gtc-s.org.uk/home/home.aspx>).

It may be possible to find work as a special needs teaching assistant first, and then progress to the position of special educational needs teacher.

# Career prospects

If you begin your career as a SEN teacher working in a mainstream school, you can become a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO).

You will need to have at least two years of qualified teaching experience and a good understanding of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) code of practice, which outlines the statutory requirements for identifying and supporting young people with SEN or disabilities.

In order to achieve national consistency, new SENCOs must complete the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination. The course is one year in duration, with a further two years to complete all requirements, and is equivalent to 60 points at Masters level. For further information, see the National Association of Special Educational Needs (nasen) (<http://www.nasen.org.uk/>).

If you become a SENCO, you will usually be the head of the special educational needs department, responsible for implementing SEN policy and for the day-to-day provision for pupils with special educational needs.

You will coordinate work with a range of agencies and parents, gather appropriate information on children with special educational needs and ensure specific provision to support pupils, including those with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans in place.

As a SENCO you will appoint learning support assistants (LSA) or teaching assistants (TA) to help individual students in the classroom and may hold the budget for these resources.

SEN teachers may progress to leadership roles such as becoming a head of department or head of year/key-stage coordinator in a secondary school. You may eventually progress to taking on a senior management role such as deputy head or head teacher.

Alternatively, progression may be possible to inspector status with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>). Others may progress to lecturing posts in further or higher education.

Some SEN teachers may choose a sideways career move and apply to become special needs officers/special needs assessment officers. These posts are based in offices within local education authority (LEA) departments.

Officers assess the provision required to meet children's special educational needs. They manage the process and ensure that recommendations are made on possible support.



(<http://agcas.org.uk/>)

**AGCAS**

Written by AGCAS editors

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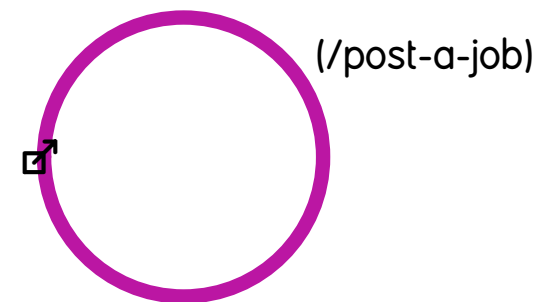
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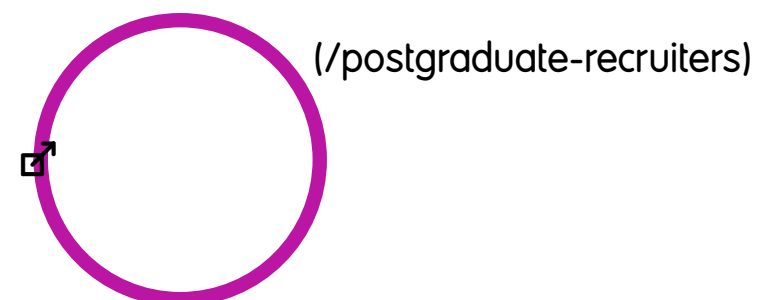
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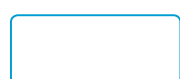
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