Looking ahead – SEND reform and our next steps

What is proposed and what it means for RJS

A worked example across the layers

An autistic child with speech, language, sensory and regulation differences.

Universal

Predictable routines, visual support, reduced language load, explicit teaching, reasonable adjustments and access to regulation strategies.

Targeted

A structured communication intervention, pre-teaching of vocabulary, planned support with transitions, a personalised regulation plan and small-group teaching – recorded and reviewed in the Individual Support Plan.

Targeted Plus

A speech and language therapist and specialist teacher assess communication barriers, advise on classroom adaptations, model strategies, train staff and help review the plan – through Experts at Hand, without the family first having to pursue an EHCP.

Specialist

If the child needs an extensively adapted curriculum, integrated therapies or a highly specialist environment that Targeted Plus cannot reasonably deliver, a Specialist Provision Package underpinned by an EHCP.

What is proposed (not yet law)

- Schools White Paper Every Child Achieving and Thriving and SEND reform consultation (DfE, February 2026)
- Three layers above the universal offer, with pupils able to draw on more than one, move up or down, and go straight to the layer that matches their need:
  - Targeted – evidence-informed small-group interventions delivered by school staff, recorded in an Individual Support Plan
  - Targeted Plus – targeted support plus specialist advice, assessment or intervention brought into school, including Experts at Hand
  - Specialist – the most complex needs that Targeted Plus cannot meet; a Specialist Provision Package underpinned by an EHCP
- Digital Individual Support Plans for all children with SEND, developed with parents
- EHCPs kept for the most complex needs; existing EHCPs see no change before September 2030 at the earliest
- Experts at Hand: educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and specialist teachers working in mainstream schools; local roll-out from September 2026
- National Inclusion Standards and an updated SEND Code of Practice
- Inclusive Mainstream Fund and over £200 million of national SEND and inclusion training for all staff
- Inclusion Bases in mainstream schools: Support Bases and Specialist Bases
- New legislation expected from September 2029; first assessments under the reformed system in 2029/30

Our next steps

- Publish our Inclusion Strategy by 31 December 2026: common barriers, inclusive practice, support without diagnosis and working with families
- Check our Individual Support Plans against the proposed model, ready for the digital ISP
- Map our Targeted Plus offer (ISAT, EP, SaLT, OT) to Derbyshire's Experts at Hand offer as it rolls out
- Plan how we use our Inclusive Mainstream Fund allocation (£12,600) to strengthen inclusive practice
- Review The Nest against the DfE Inclusion Bases guidance (June 2026)
- DfE SEND and inclusion training for all staff in 2026–27
- Work with Embark and draw on CST guidance as the reforms develop, keeping families informed

Evidence and policy base

- SEND Code of Practice 0–25 (2015) – graduated approach, four areas of need
- DfE Every Child Achieving and Thriving (Schools White Paper) and SEND reform: putting children and young people first (February 2026) – proposals, not yet law
- DfE SEND reform information for mainstream schools; What's happening now (June 2026)
- DfE Inclusion bases in schools (June 2026) – six principles
- CST response to the SEND reform consultation (May 2026)
- EEF Guide to Inclusive Teaching (2026); EEF SEND in Mainstream Schools – 'five a day'; EEF deploying teaching assistants (2025)
- National Inclusion Standards – to be published