

CHILDREN AND AUTISM · 7.4

School Support for Autism: EHCPs, Reasonable Adjustments and the SENCo

School support for an autistic child in England runs on three pieces of law: the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice, and the Equality Act 2010. All three matter, and parents often only learn them as they go.

FOR

Parents working with school

AUDIENCE AGE

6-17

REVIEWED

17 May 2026

PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

School Support for Autism: EHCPs, Reasonable Adjustments and the SENCo

How the system is built

- **Two main levels of in-school support.** SEN Support is the default level, coordinated by the SENCo, with day-to-day adjustments led by the class teacher. An EHCP is a legally binding plan issued by the local authority where SEN Support alone is not enough.
- **Reasonable adjustments are a separate legal duty.** Under the Equality Act 2010, schools must make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. Autism is a disability under the Act. The duty applies whether or not your child has a diagnosis, an EHCP, or any specific paperwork.
- **A diagnosis is not legally required.** SEN Support, an EHCP and reasonable adjustments are all available without a formal autism diagnosis. The diagnosis substantially strengthens the case in practice, but it is not the legal trigger.

What it looks like in practice

- **Common SEN Support adjustments for an autistic child.** Visual timetables, predictable transitions, advance warning of changes, sensory adjustments to the environment, a quiet space at break, a consistent point of contact, exam access arrangements where needed.
- **EHCPs are often appropriate where needs go beyond SEN Support.** Significant social communication or sensory difficulty, co-occurring learning difficulty, language disorder or mental health difficulty, school refusal driven by unmet need, or a specialist placement being considered.
- **The SENCo is the main school contact.** They maintain the SEN register, coordinate SEN Support, liaise with external professionals and lead on EHCP processes. A good working relationship with the SENCo is one of the most useful things a parent can build.
- **Behaviour policies and autistic distress.** Autistic distress should not be treated as a behaviour problem. Where a school's behaviour policy is being applied without reasonable adjustments to a disabled pupil, the Equality Act framing is the right framing.

What you can do when support is thin

- **Request a SEN review meeting with the SENCo.** Bring specific examples and a clear statement of what is not working. Document meltdowns, shutdowns, school refusal patterns, behaviour incidents and communications.
- **Request an EHC needs assessment.** Parents can request one directly; school permission is not needed. The local authority has six weeks to decide. If it refuses, you have a right of appeal to the SEND Tribunal.
- **Get independent advice.** IPSEA, the Council for Disabled Children, Contact and the National Autistic Society give independent legal advice. It often differs substantially from what schools and local authorities tell parents.
- **Get the assessment done if it has not been.** An autism diagnosis substantially strengthens any school case. NeuroFX offers private autism assessment for children aged 6 and upwards, with combined ADHD and autism assessment where both are being considered.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to the school SENCo as the first practical step. Speak to your GP if paediatric autism assessment is needed or if mental health is involved. NHS waits for paediatric autism services are often long; private assessment with a CQC-registered provider is a legitimate parallel route. For independent SEN legal advice, IPSEA is the go-to. Seek urgent help via 111, 999 or A&E for any acute mental health crisis or significant safety concern.

SOURCES

SEND Code of Practice (DfE); Children and Families Act 2014; Equality Act 2010; NICE CG170; IPSEA; National Autistic Society

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

neurofx.co.uk · info@neurofx.co.uk · 0333 533 3303