**Sheffield Inclusion TaskForce**

**Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification and Moderation of levels Guidance for schools**

**February 2025**

**Introduction**

The Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification document has been designed to support the identification of needs and provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities within Sheffield’s Primary (Foundation Stage 2 – Year 6) and Secondary (Year 7 – Year 11) schools.

The Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification (SSGe) document builds on the previously used Sheffield Support Grid (SSG), using co-production across partner agencies and services - including Local Authority, Health and Care agencies, schools and colleagues throughout Primary and Secondary key stages - to provide an up to date and informed guidance document and toolkit for practitioners, families and young people. The Sheffield Support Grid has recently been updated in January 2025.

The guidance provides background to the SSGe’s inception, how it supports schools to meet the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice (2015), support and guidance on its intended use, elements of good practice to be noted when levelling a child against the various areas of need and the types of provision available to meet these needs.

The Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification Grid meets requirements of the Law and SEND. Tribunal judgements have stated in previous tribunals that it is not illegal, and is indeed appropriate, for Local Areas to have a consistent model that demonstrates identification and assessment of need so long as individual provision is then specified and quantified. To this end the Local Area has developed the SSGe to support schools, practitioners and parents in identifying need and provision correctly for pupils with Special Educational Needs in the city’s schools and education settings.

This guidance document also details the systems, processes and support in place for school professionals regarding the levelling, moderation and communication of levels of need and provision to the Local Authority.

**Guidance Content:**

1. What is the Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification document?
2. What is the function of the Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification document?
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9. **What is the Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification document?**

The [Sheffield Support Grid](https://learnsheffield.co.uk/Downloads/InclusionDocuments/24-25/SSGe%20Jan%2025.pdf) can be found on the Learn Sheffield website.

The SSG Exemplification document is divided into 4 main areas of need, mirroring those set out in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (April 2015); these being ‘Communication and Interaction’, ‘Cognition and Learning’, ‘Social Emotional Mental Health’ and ‘Sensory and Physical’ Needs. Each of these areas of need is then broken down into smaller subsections which form the different parts of the grid, see table below for details on these subsections.

Table 1 – Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification document sub-sections and how they relate to Special Educational Needs as set out in the SEND Code of Practice (2015)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Communication and Interaction | A. Speech and Language  |
| B. Social Communication (and including those with a diagnosis of Autism) |
| C. Speech and Fluency |
| 2. Cognition and Learning | Cognition and Learning |
| 3. Social Emotional Mental Health | Social Emotional Mental Health |
| 4. Sensory and Physical | A. Visual Impairment |
| B. Hearing Impairment |
| C. Physical |
| D. Medical |
| E. Sensory Needs |

The updated SSG 2025 has collapsed section 2a General Learning Difficulties and 2b Specific Learning Difficulties and made one section: Cognition and Learning. We have also collapsed section 3a Emotional Regulation and 3b Mental Health and made one section: Social Emotional Mental Health.

We have included 1c Speech and Fluency. This subsection has been in use by Speech and Language for some time, and so is now included in the grid. We also have included the subsection 4e Sensory Needs.

**2. What is the function of the Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification document?**

The SSG is intended to be used as a guide for schools, parents and other agencies to support a graduated approach to identifying a pupil’s Special Educational Needs and providing guidance and support to schools on how to meet them.

The SSGe includes the following information:

1. a description of needs for each subsection
2. the profiling, review and assessment tools that may be being used, or could be used, to further understand and profile the pupil’s needs and measure the progress being made by the pupil. The updated SSGe contains suggested screening and assessment tools that settings can use for each area of need.
3. types and examples of provision that would be expected to be in place to meet the described needs. The updated SSGe contains recommended interventions, useful websites and resources.
4. agencies, professionals and pathways where further advice or support may be gained
5. the updated SSG grid includes Ordinarily Available Documents. These replace the descriptions of provision for Levels 1 and 2. The Ordinarily Available Documents describes the adjustments and adaptations that schools can put into place without the need for additional resource or expert advice.
6. for section 1a Speech and Language, 1c Speech and Fluency and Section 2 Cognition and Learning, we have included levelling grids to help settings consider the holistic profile of the child when ascribing a level of need.

Previously the grid was used to support the dissemination of the Local Authority’s High Needs Funding Block, ‘Element 3’ Funding in mainstream schools. In the academic year 2024/2025 the funding of children from the High Needs Block is changing.

Schools and localities are required to provide the Local Authority with their SSGe levels for any pupil placed on the grid at Level 3 or above which then supports the authority to understand the local context and make plans around this

**3. How is a pupil levelled on the Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification Document?**

Any pupil can be placed / levelled on the SSGe regardless of their SEN Status.

The SSG Exemplification has been designed to support schools’ responses to identifying and meeting pupil needs through a graduated SEND approach. Within this graduated approach the document makes reference to types of support, possible observed behaviours and further steps that can be utilised; for example as a pupil’s needs become more complex the SSGe suggests the use of the Sheffield ‘Extended Support Plan’ to draw together important information about the pupil.

Schools and other agencies should use the grid as a guide to identify needs and the provision required to meet them. Schools should always refer to the Law around duties to recognise and meet a pupil’s Special Educational Needs as set out in the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and the Children and Families Act (2014).

As the SSGe is guidance, an individual pupil’s level / position on the grid alone does not automatically ensure or preclude a level/category of SEND support, and does not affect the pupil’s or family’s / carer’s rights to request statutory assessment of possible Education, Health and Care Needs.

A pupil is normally placed on the SSG Exemplification by the school’s SENCo. During the levelling process the SENCo may take advice from Outside Agency practitioners who know or are actively involved with the pupil, or from their reports, whilst also discussing the pupil’s needs with the parent(s)/carer(s) and pupil themselves (if appropriate) through planned SEN reviews and meetings. Advisory services will also be using the SSGe to identify a pupil’s level of need to support schools in planning and meeting needs.

**4. Which area of the Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification should be used for a pupil?**

A pupil with Special Educational Needs will generally have a primary area of need and provision, in most cases this section of the grid is where a school will begin plotting the pupil. For example, if a pupil has difficulty retaining or learning new concepts the school would utilise the Cognition and Learning elements of the SSGe. However, it is good practice to recognise that a pupil’s needs can span more than one section of the SSGe and that these needs may impact on the type of provision required in more than one area.

Schools should therefore ensure that identified needs, described behaviours and levels of provided provision are plotted against each appropriate grid section and that, where a pupil presents with areas of need or has a diagnosed need, the impact of these needs should be considered against other areas of the grid to ensure that possible underlying needs are identified and appropriate provision put in place. For example, a pupil is recognised as having difficulties with regards to regulating their emotions. The school should therefore take appropriate steps to investigate any underlying developmental, learning and/or communication needs which may be the cause of the emotional regulation difficulties, contributory factors towards the difficulty or the cause of other resultant needs.

The SSG Exemplification Document levels (1-5) build on each other. There is an expectation that pupils plotted at a specified level will have access to the levels of assessment/review, provision and other professional support as set out in the levels below their given level.

**5. What are Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification pen-portraits?**

From Level 3, the sub-sections of the SSGe document provides detailed information about what behaviours may be observed and the types of assessment, tools, provision and agencies that could be appropriate to meet the needs observed. The SSGe document starts at Level 1 for each subsection and build with regards to the severity of need and level of provision, the upper most level being Level 5.

It is important to note that the SSGe document has been created through a graduated response to meeting a pupil’s needs, i.e. a pupil accessing Level 3 provision will also be accessing provision as detailed in the Ordinarily Available Documents.

Pen-portraits:

To aid school staff, parents and other practitioners the sub-section from level 3-5 begins with a short pen-portrait. The pen-portrait is intended to briefly preview each level to enable the reader to quickly ascertain whether or not they are accessing the SSGe document at an appropriate level for the pupil in question. The pen-portraits are tailored to each sub-section and are based on the following framework guidance.

Table 2. Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification level framework guide

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Level 1 | The pupil’s needs can be met through what is regarded as Ordinarily Available Provision, i.e. a level of provision that can be reasonably expected in a classroom / teaching environment. |
| Level 2 | The pupil has identified needs that require reasonable adjustments to be made. These needs are met in the classroom, with access to some out of class intervention (ie. small group, Wave 2 intervention) to help them close the gap with peers in particular areas of the curriculum.  |
| Level 3 | The pupil has identified needs which impact on their access to parts of the curriculum. Pupils with complex or overlapping needs may have an Extended Support Plan at this level. The pupil is able to access the classroom curriculum but requires a significant amount of intervention, within and outside of the classroom, specific to the needs of the pupil (Wave 2 and 3) which will be supported by school and Outside Agency practitioners. |
| Level 4 | The pupil has more complex or severe needs, usually spanning a number of areas of the grid, which impact on their ability to access a mainstream curriculum. They access a highly bespoke timetable designed to meet their personal needs and structure their learning, using advice from Outside Agency practitioners. The level of need, and therefore provision required, would indicate that in most cases whilst access to mainstream classroom based learning opportunities may be limited, a mainstream education remains appropriate. |
| Level 5\* | The pupil’s needs are significant and severe, which greatly impair their ability to access a mainstream setting or curriculum. In most cases, a Level 5 pupil’s exceptional level of need will require specialist provision and input. This will include ongoing and completely bespoke support, in order to meet highly personalised learning, and personal life-long development, outcomes which are set by the pupil (if appropriate), family, school staff and Outside Agency practitioners. |

\*Pupil’s placed at Level 5 on the grid are recognised as having exceptional levels of need. Where a child is placed at Level 5 need or provision, in any area of the Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification document, it is expected that this level will be allocated alongside moderation agreement from Local Authority representation (e.g. Locality SEND Manager, NHS Health services and Educational Psychology Service) – in conjunction with agreement from other professional outside agencies, parents, the CYP (where appropriate) and school staff.

**6. How do schools report data linked to the Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification levels allocated?**

The collated information provides an overview for the city and locality regarding levels of Special Educational Needs, and type thereof, to further inform strands of development work.

Each locality and their schools are required to annually compile a list of the children accessing the SSG Exemplification document at Level 3 or above, in at least one area of the grid for either need or provision. For each pupil plotted on the SSGe schools are required to include the following information:

1. Pupil UPN – copy and pasted from school systems where possible to avoid errors
2. Name – Surname and Forename to be provided
3. Year Group – National Curriculum year/Year Group as recorded by SIMs
4. Stage of SEN – None (N), SEN Support (K), Extended Support Plan (K), EHCP (E) or Statement (S)
5. If a child is plotted as a level 5, that this been moderated by the agencies supporting.
6. Pupils’ primary need and provision – Section of the Grid and levels of need and provision attributed
7. Pupil’s secondary and tertiary needs / provision (if applicable)
8. Graduated SEND Response documents currently in place for the pupil

Fig 1. SSGe Returns Proforma



After completion, the school is required to securely send this data to their designated Locality SENCo or Locality Lead Head Teacher. At this point the locality’s data is collated and is sent via the secure Anycomms system to the Local Authority’s Performance and Analysis Service (PAS).

**7. How are Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification levels moderated by the Local Authority?**

In previous years moderation exercises were completed across the city to establish consistency in our understanding of children with additional needs. More recently, moderation is completed by supporting agencies and locality SENCos.

**8.What are the requirements on schools when collecting and reporting Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification data?**

The Local Authority requires annual updates regarding the number and details of pupil’s accessing the SSGe at Levels 3 and above in each of the localities. Schools complete data grids indicating the number of children at Level 3 and above on the SSG. They indicate the paperwork in place and level of provision that the child is accessing.

**The information provided in this document is accurate as of February 2025.**

Updates to processes, guidance and definitions will be communicated to schools through Inclusion Taskforce, Locality Head Teachers and Locality SENCo communication channels. This Guidance, the Sheffield Support Grid Exemplification document and associated other associated documentation will be updated to reflect any changes made.