

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2025/26

Special Educational Needsⁱ and Disabilityⁱⁱ (SEND)

Summary points

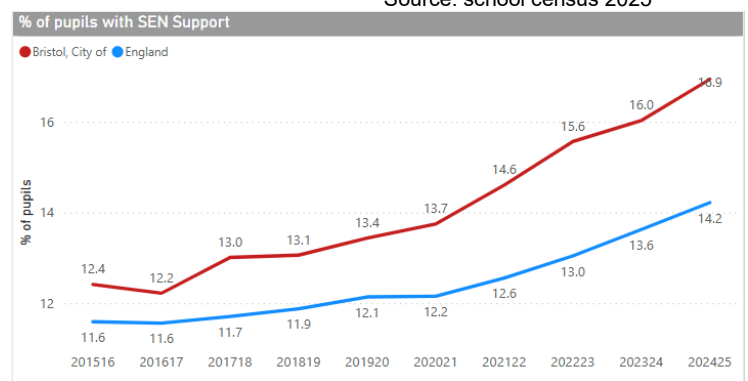
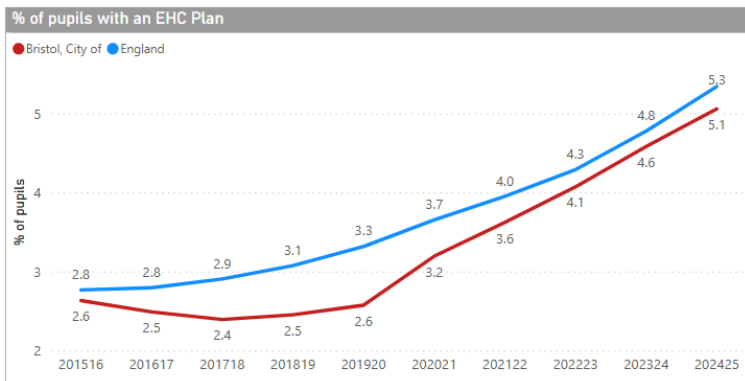
- Over 15,400 pupils in Bristol schools have special educational needs (Jan 2025). The proportion of pupils with SEN in Bristol schools has been increasing year on year and has increased by 5.8% between 2024 and 2025.
- Rates of SEN vary significantly across the city.
- Social, emotional and mental health is the most common primary need for pupils with SEN in Bristol schools
- Bristol has an above average rate of pupils with SEN support and the gap to national is growing.
- Educational outcomes are significantly lower for pupils with SEN, especially for children with an EHC plan.

Numbers of children and young people with SEN in Bristol schools

As at January 2025, there were 70,173 children on roll in Bristol schools¹.

- 15,437 pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
 - 11,887 (16.9%) are receiving SEN support
 - 3,550 (5.1%) have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan

Source: school census 2025



The proportion of pupils with an EHC plan continues to increase both locally and nationally. Bristol remains below the national average, but the gap is narrowing. Bristol has a much higher than average proportion of pupils with SEN Support and this gap is growing.

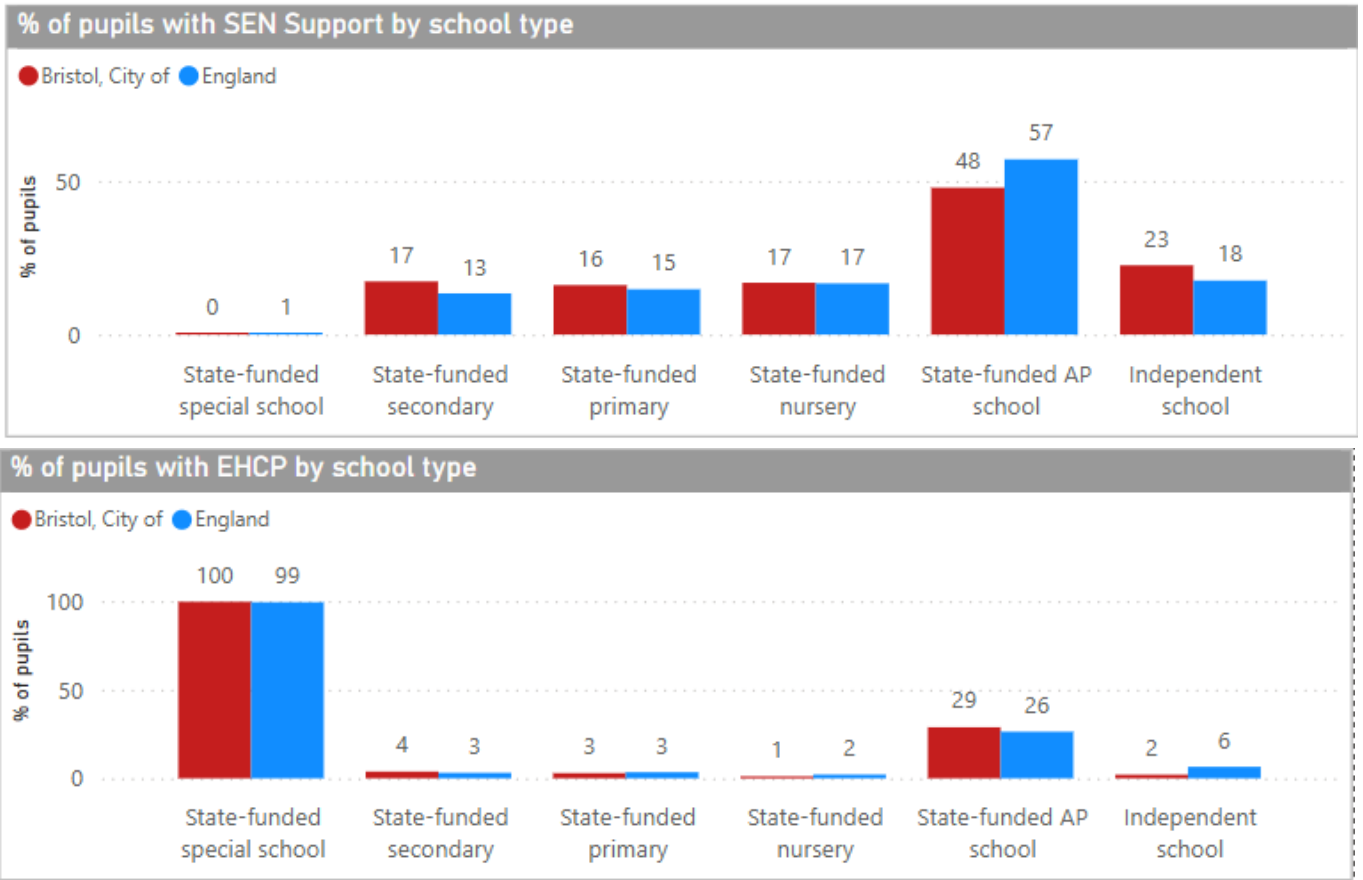
SEN is more prevalent in boys than girls, both locally and nationally.

- 72% of pupils with an EHC plan are boys
- 61% of pupils with SEN Support are boys

In Bristol, rates of EHC plans and SEN support are higher in secondary schools than primary schools. Nationally rates are higher in primary schools. Bristol has an increasing proportion of pupils with an EHC plan or SEN support in nursery schools, and this is now in line with the national average. Bristol has a higher-than-average rate of pupils with SEN support in both primary and secondary schools when compared with national averages.

¹ All Bristol schools including academies and independent schools.

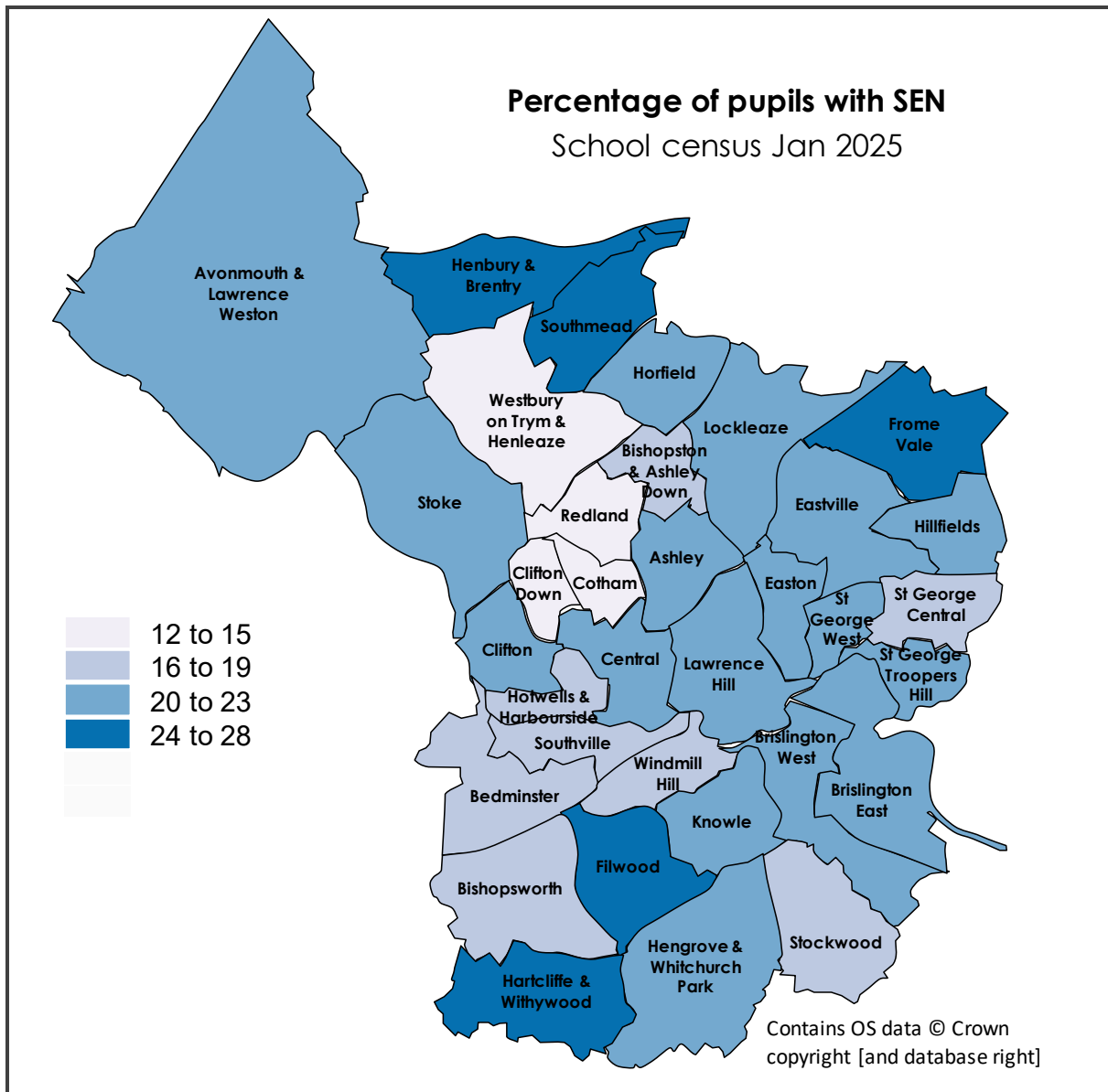
- In primary schools, 3% of pupils have an EHC plan and 16% have SEN support
- In secondary schools, 4% of pupils have an EHC plan and 17% have SEN support



SOURCE: SCHOOL CENSUS JAN 2025

Percentage of Pupils with SEN by Ward

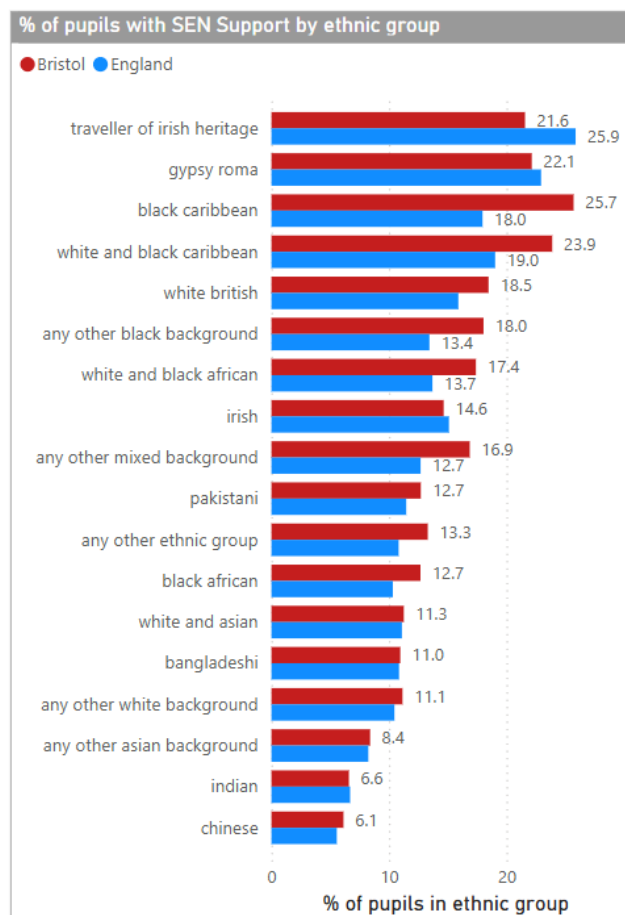
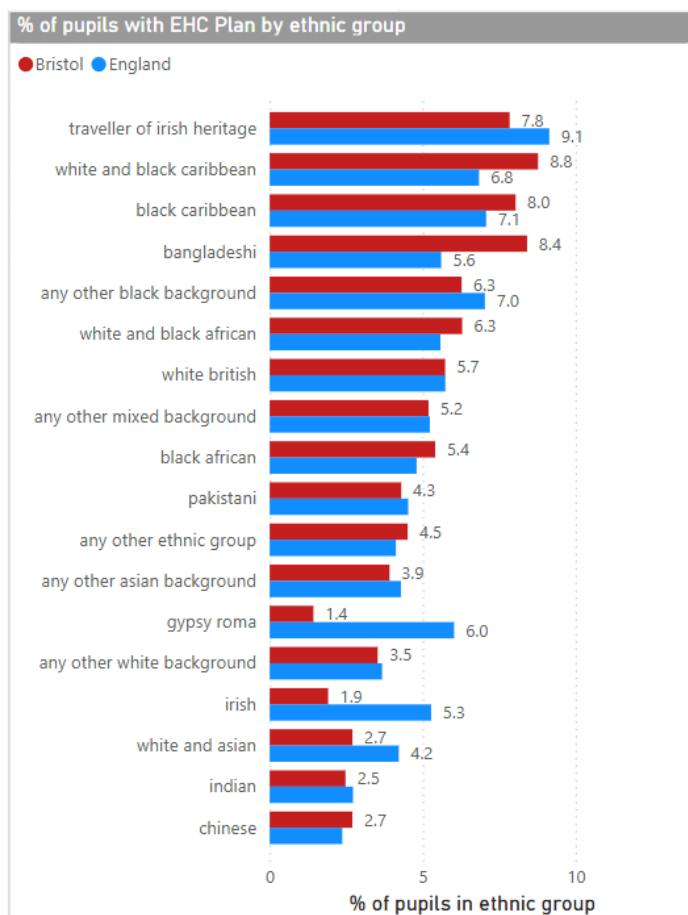
Local school census data for pupils with SEN (EHC plans and SEN support) shows a wide variation across Bristol, ranging from 12.3% in Redland and Cotham to 28% in Hartcliffe and Withywood.



Ethnicity

SEN support is most prevalent in the Black Caribbean ethnic group in Bristol and EHC plans are most prevalent in the White and Black Caribbean ethnic group.

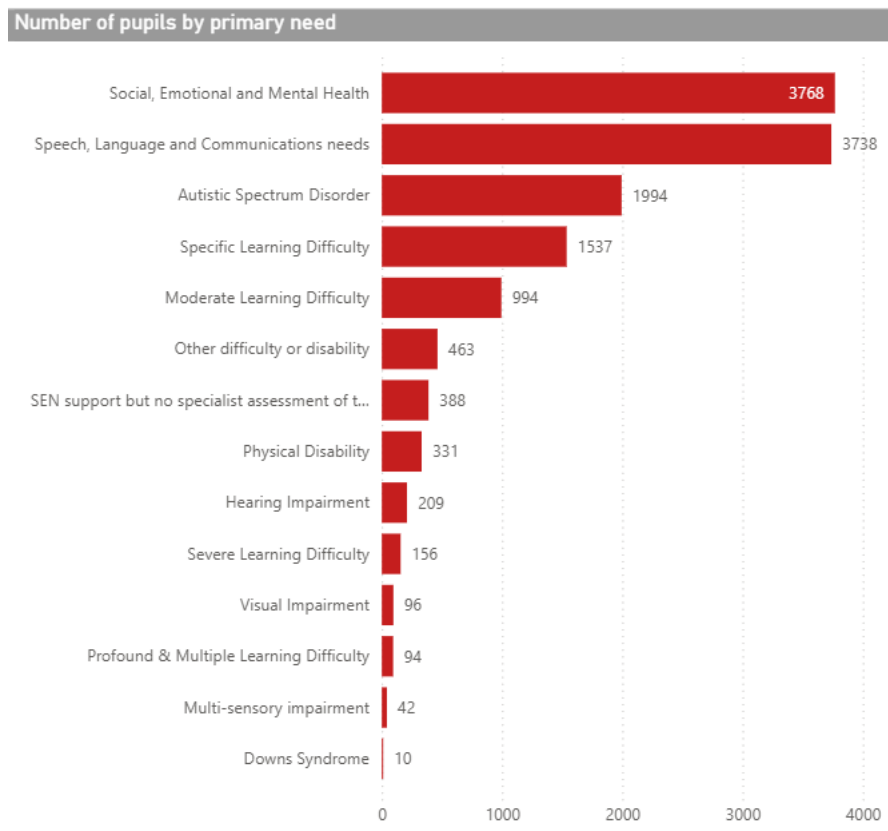
Bristol has a significantly higher rate of Black Caribbean pupils receiving SEN Support than the national average (25.7% compared to 18%). The lowest rates for SEN are for children and young people from Chinese and Indian communities.



SOURCE: SCHOOL CENSUS JAN 2025

Primary Need of children with SEN

Social, emotional and mental health is the most common primary need for pupils with SEN in Bristol schools. For pupils with an EHC plan the most common need type is Autistic Spectrum Disorder (1,146 pupils). This is the same nationally. The greatest increase in primary need for children with an EHC plan, between 2024 and 2025 was speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) which increased by 118 pupils to 639.



SOURCE: SCHOOL CENSUS JAN 25

The most common primary need for SEN pupils in primary schools is speech, language and communication needs (2,520 pupils) and in secondary schools the most common primary need type is social, emotional and mental health (1,784 pupils).

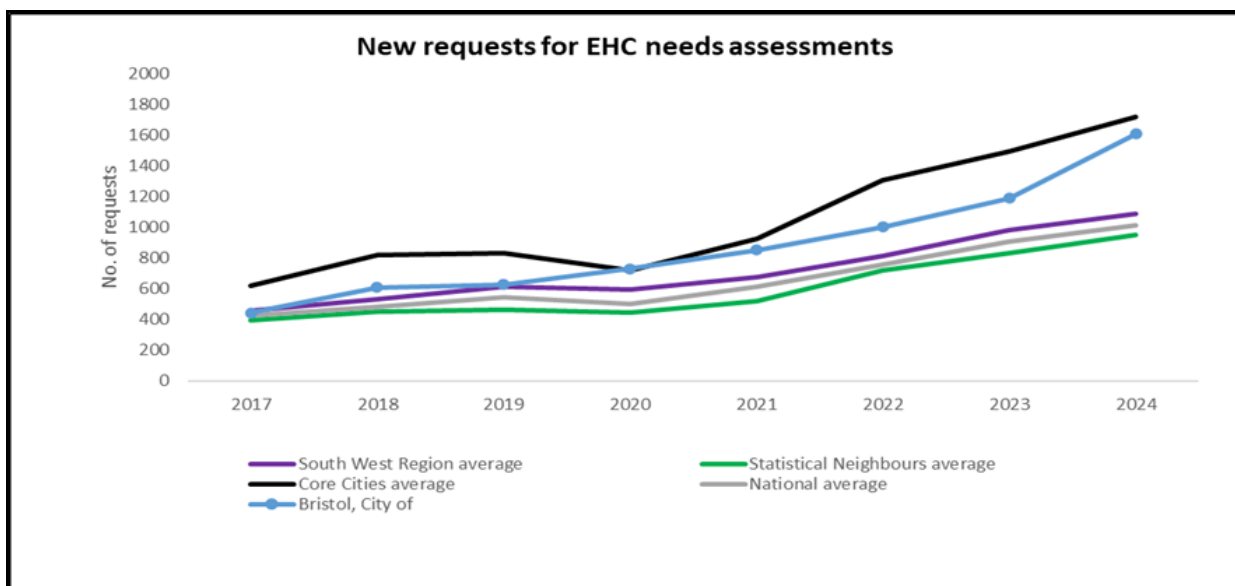
Social care (as of Jan 2025)²

- 3.5% (172) of children in Bristol with an EHC plan are in care
- 0.9% (45) of children in Bristol with an EHC plan are subject to a child protection plan
- 5.2% (258) of children in in Bristol with an EHC plan are children in need

EHC Needs Assessmentsⁱⁱⁱ

There were 1,605 initial requests for an EHC plan in Bristol during 2024, up by 35% compared to 2023. Nationally there was a 12% increase. Bristol’s requests received in 2024 represented 0.9% of Bristol’s 0–25-year-old population which is comparable to the national picture.

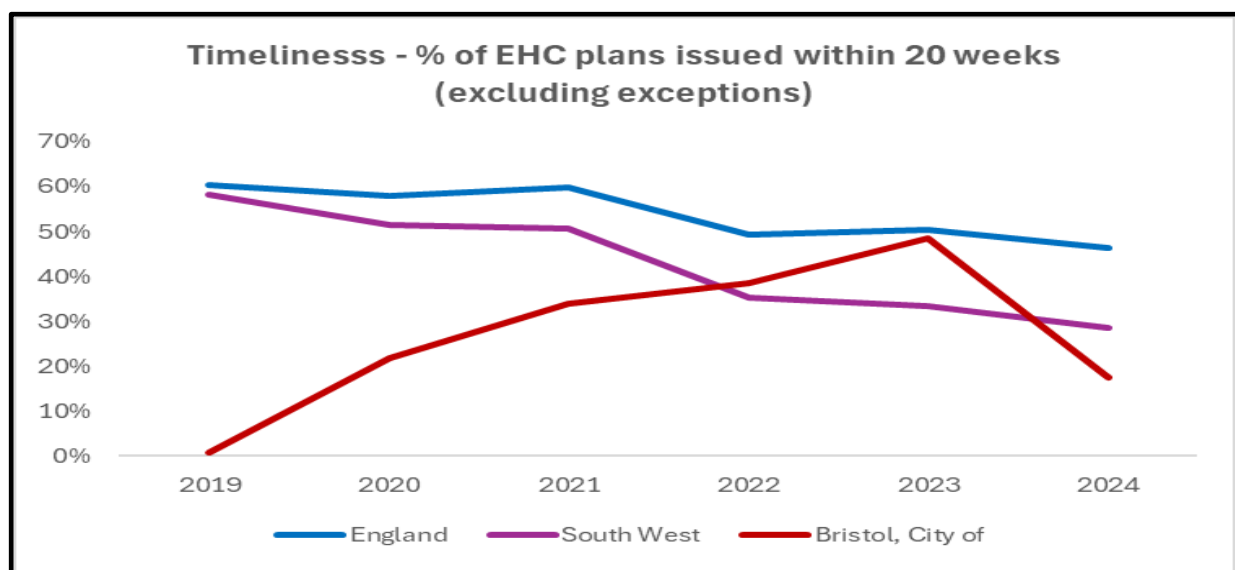
² Source: Bristol City Council Local data as at the end of January 2025.



SOURCE: SEN2 2024

Current year data shows 1,083 requests between January 2025 and September 2025, a decrease of 6% on the same period in 2024. The majority of requests to date are for primary school aged children (51%), with 27% for secondary and 19% for early years. In the last year there has been an increase in the proportion of requests for early years children. (Source: BCC internal data)

In 2024, 17.4%³ of EHC plans were finalised within the statutory 20 week timescale. This is below the national average of 46.4%. Timeliness in 2024 was impacted by the significant increase in requests for EHC need assessment requests which was affected by the withdrawal of non-statutory Top-up funding in February 2024.



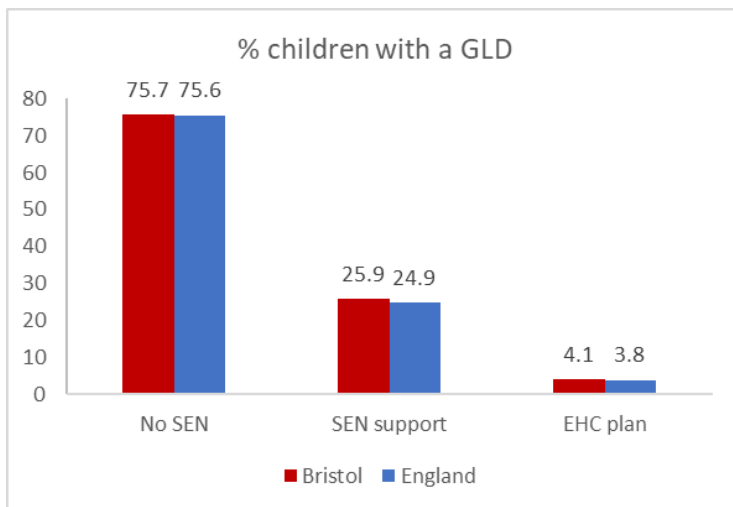
SOURCE: SEN2 2024

³ DfE Key performance measure – excludes plans issued after a mediation and/or tribunal and any exception cases

Education

Early years

- In 2024, 25.9% of children receiving SEN support achieved a good level of development at Early Years Foundation Stage, compared to the England average of 24.9%. For Bristol this is an increase of 0.3 percentage points when compared to the previous year but still falls well below children with no identified SEN (75.7%).
- 4.1% of children with an EHC plan achieved a good level of development at Early Years Foundation Stage, higher than the England average of 3.8%.

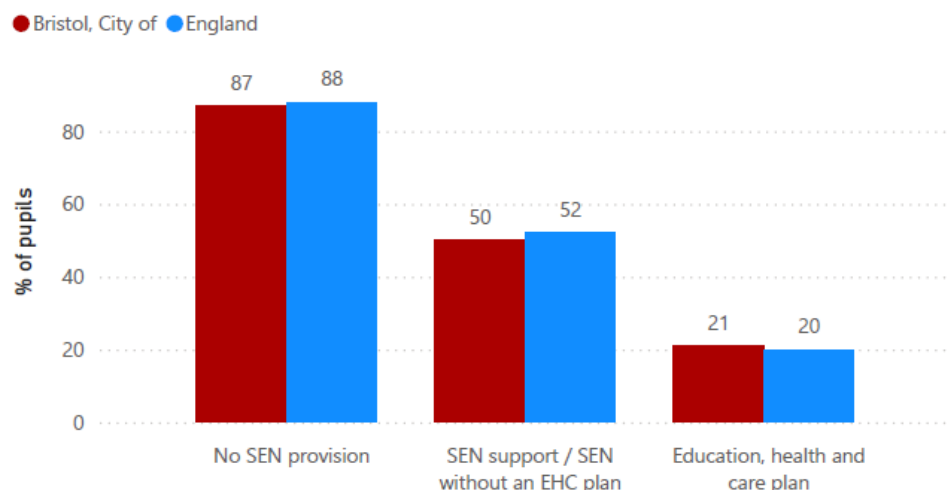


Source: DfE data

Phonics

- In 2025, the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in phonics year 1 is lowest for children with SEN – especially those with an EHC plan.
- However, outcomes for children with SEN have improved in the last year in Bristol. The gap between Bristol’s SEN support children and the national average has narrowed and children with an EHC plan in Bristol are now above the national average by 1ppt.

% of pupils meeting the expected standard - SEN status

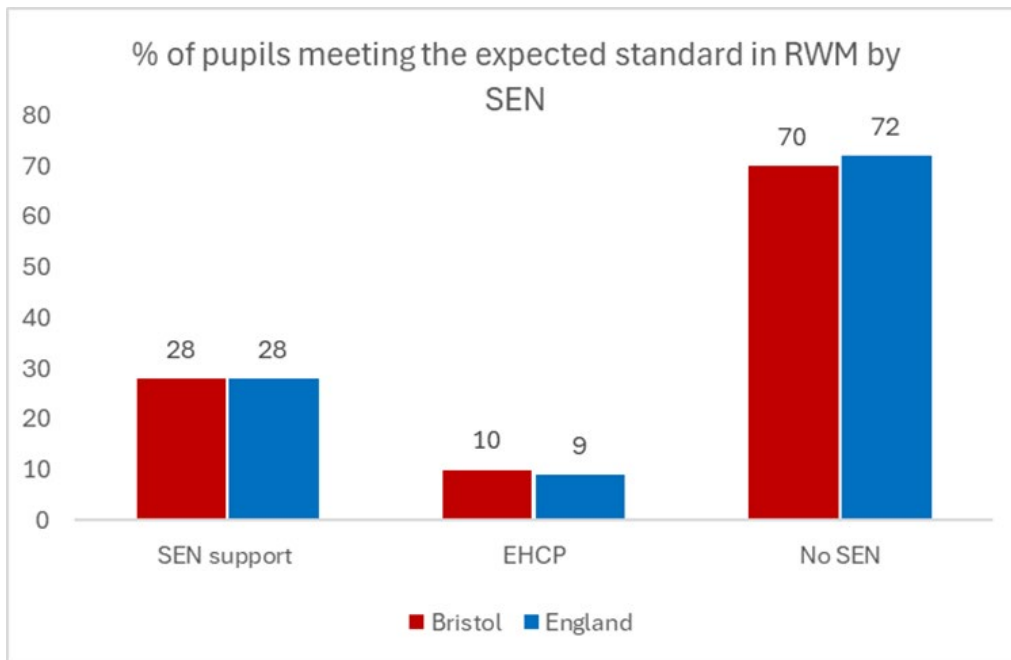


source: DfE provisional data

KS2

- KS2 attainment results are lower for pupils with SEN, especially those with an EHC plan.
- Provisional data shows that the gap between pupils with SEN and pupils with no SEN has decreased.
- The proportion of pupils with an EHC plan meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths has increased and is now above the national average.

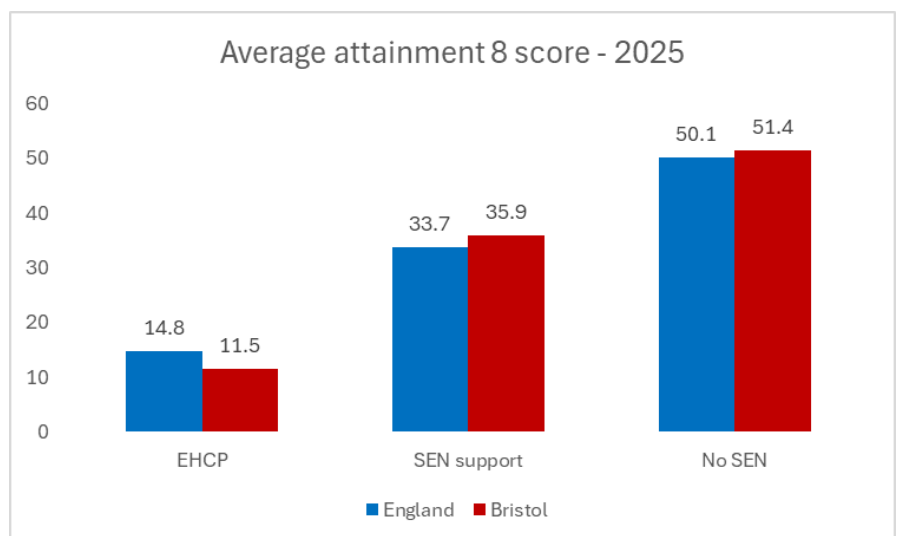
- Increase in the percentage of pupils receiving SEN support meeting the expected standard (+4ppts).



Source: DfE provisional data 2025

KS4

- In 2025, the average attainment 8 score for pupils with SEN support was 35.9, above the national average of 33.7.
- The average score was 11.5 for pupils with an EHC plan, below the England average of 14.8.
- 27.9% of pupils with SEN support achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSEs and 5.8% of pupils with an EHC plan. This compares to 52.8% of pupils with no SEN.

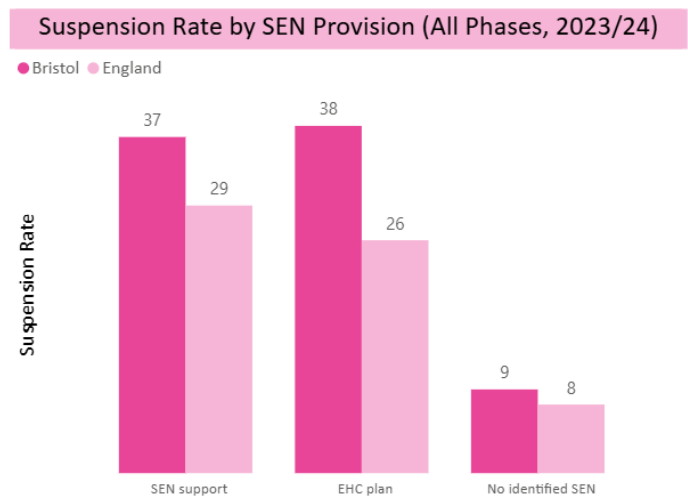


Source: DfE provisional data

- KS4 performance for pupils with SEN remains significantly lower than pupils without SEN.

Absence/suspensions

- Suspension rates are significantly higher for pupils with SEN.
- Between 2023 and 2024, The suspension rate has increased for pupils with SEN and decreased for those with no SEN.
- Suspension rates for pupils with SEN in Bristol are significantly higher than the national average.
- Permanent exclusion rates are increasing both locally and nationally. In Bristol for 2023/24, the permanent exclusion rate for pupils with an EHC plan was 0.29 (0.26 nationally). For pupils with SEN support the rate was 0.32 (0.41 nationally).
- In 2023/24, the absence rate for children and young people with an EHC plan in Bristol was 16.2, compared to the England average of 12.6.
- Absence rates for children and young people at SEN Support level in Bristol was 12.1, compared to the England average of 10.2.



Post 16

- At the end of 2022/23, 83.4% of KS4 pupils with an EHC plan who left KS4 in 2021/22 were in sustained education, employment and apprenticeships, below the national average of 88.2%
- 86.6% of KS4 pupils with SEN support were in sustained education, employment and apprenticeships, below the national average of 87.1%⁴.
- 11.8% of 16-17 year olds with an EHC plan are recorded as NEET or Not Known for 2024⁵. This is worse than the national average of 10.1%.
- In 2024, 16.2% of 19 year olds with an EHC plan and 52.0% with SEN support were qualified to Level 2 including English and maths. This compares to 76.2% of pupils with no identified SEN⁶.
- 10.8% of 19 year olds with an EHC plan were qualified to level 3 and 42.8% of pupils with SEN support.

Further data / links

- Bristol’s SEND Local Offer – www.Bristol.gov.uk/web/bristol-local-offer
- [Special educational needs in England, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england)
- [Education, health and care plans, Reporting year 2025 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-health-and-care-plans-reporting-year-2025)
- [Education, Health and Care plans LIVE](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/education-health-and-care-plans-live)

Date updated: October 2025

⁴ Source: DfE: Key stage 4 destination measure. Data is for pupils in state funded mainstream and special schools.

⁵ Data is an average of the rates for Dec 2024, Jan 2025 and Feb 2025.

⁶ Source: DfE: Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16-25

Endnotes: Definitions

ⁱ **Special educational needs (SEN)ⁱ**

A child or young person has special educational needs (SEN) if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child or young person is considered to have a learning difficulty if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age. A child or young person has a learning disability if they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

ⁱⁱ **Disability**

A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial, long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Statutory guidance and the SEND [Code of Practice](#) provide additional information to help with the interpretation and application of these definitions. The statutory definitions of special educational needs (SEN) and disability which are described above are found in Section 20 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and section 6 of the Equality Act 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Education, health and care needs assessment (EHCNA)**

The majority of children and young people with SEN or disabilities will have their needs met within local mainstream early years settings, schools or colleges. Some children and young people may require an EHC needs assessment in order for the local authority to decide whether it is necessary for it to make provision in accordance with an EHC plan. The assessment seeks to establish and record the views, interests and aspirations of the parents and child or young person to provide a full description of the child or young person's special educational needs, and any health and social care needs. It establishes outcomes across education, health and social care based on the child or young person's identified needs and aspirations. It specifies the provision required and how education, health and care services will work together to meet the child or young person's needs and support the achievement of the agreed outcomes.