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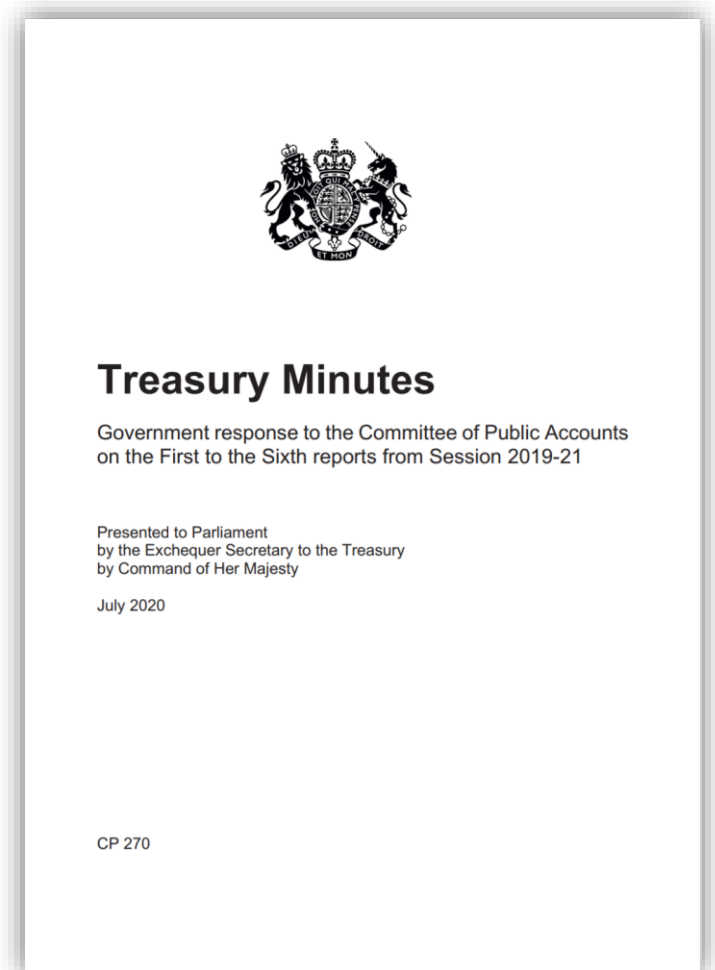
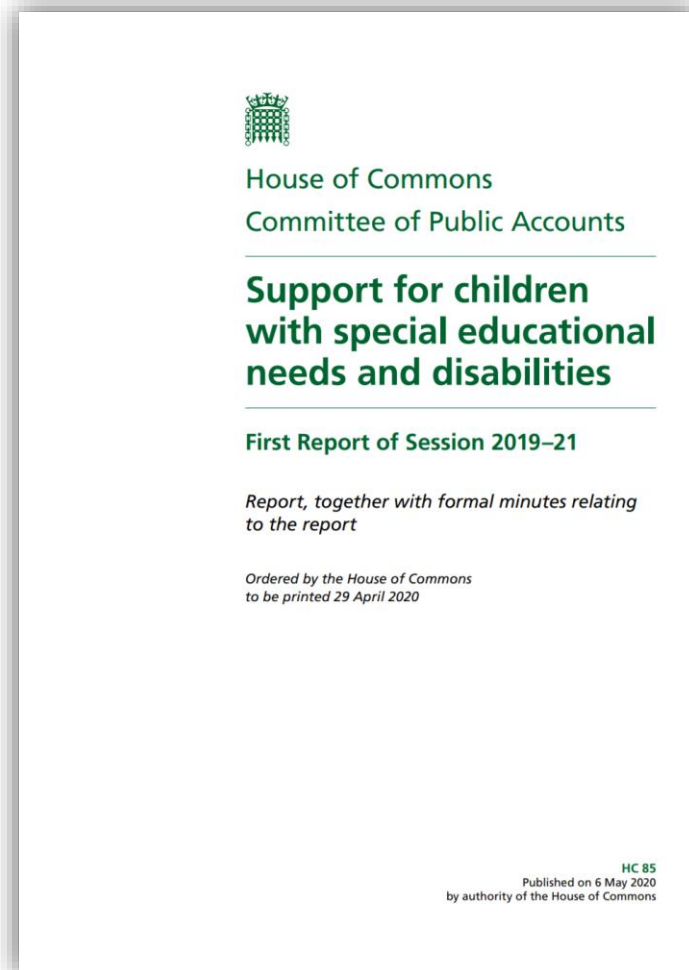
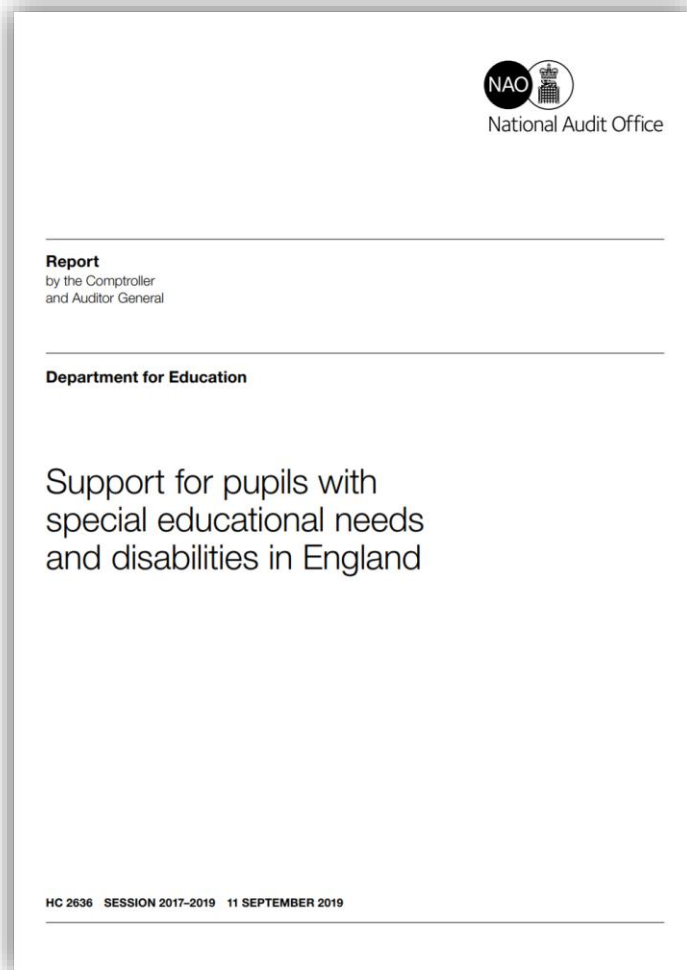
Assessing support for pupils with SEND in England

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Audit Manager, Education value for money audit

7 October 2020

Accountability to Parliament



What did the NAO say?

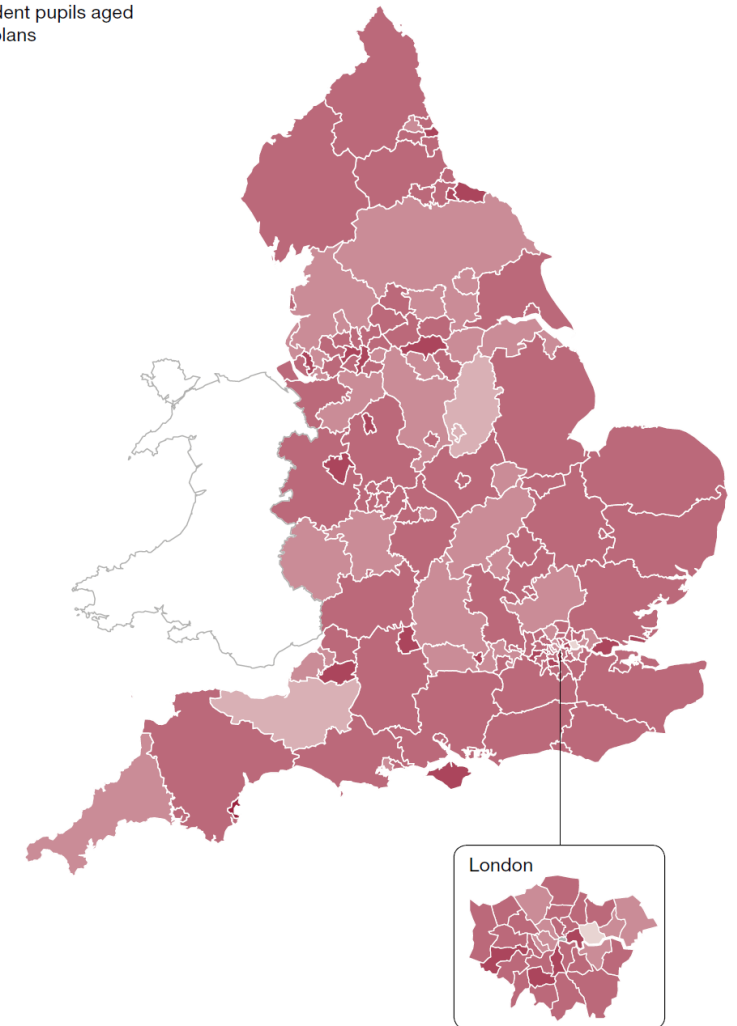
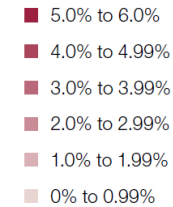
- “Access to the right support is crucial to the happiness and life chances of the 1.3 million pupils with SEND in England. While lots of schools, both special and mainstream, are providing high-quality education for pupils with SEND, it is clear that many children’s needs are not being met.”
- “I therefore welcome the Department for Education’s announcement last week of a review into support for children with SEND, following our engagement with them on this issue over recent months. We hope the review will secure the improvements in quality and sustainability that are needed.”

Gareth Davies, head of the NAO

Local variation – EHC plans

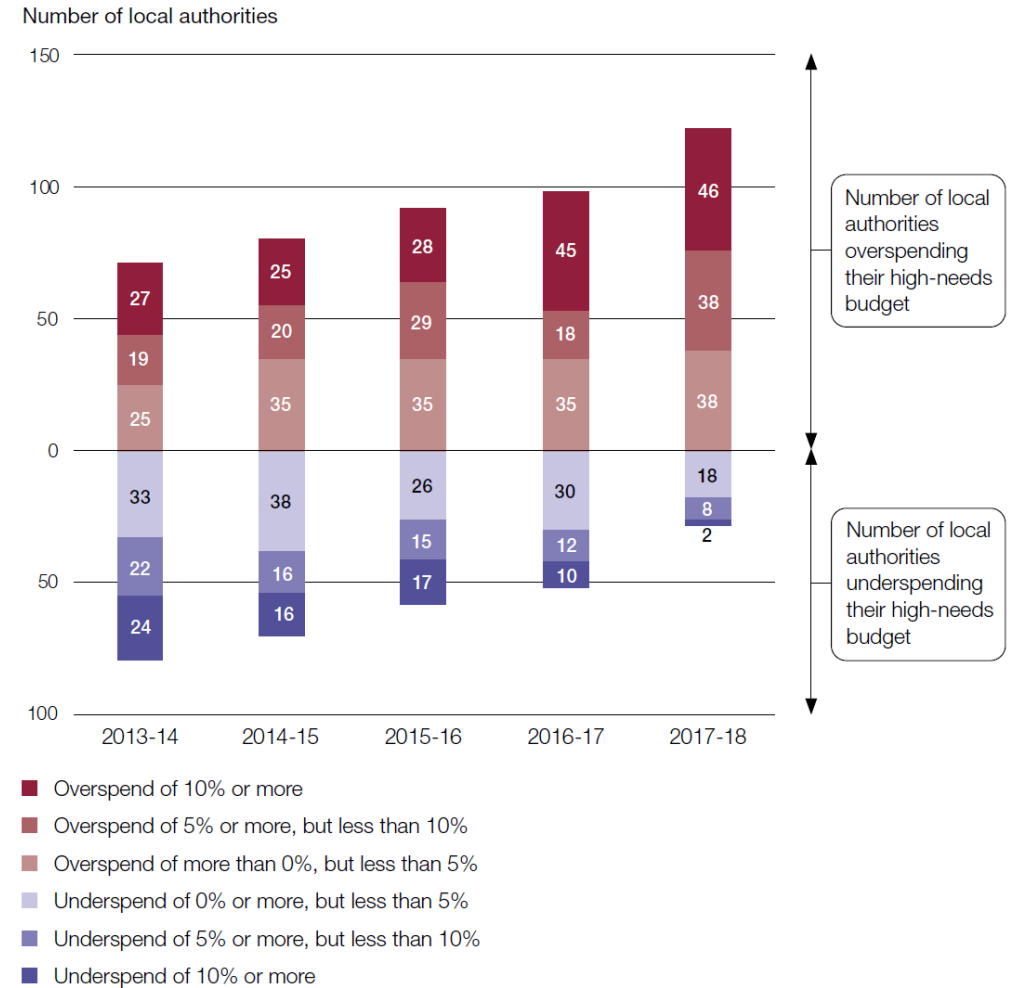
- At January 2019 there were 1.3 million pupils with SEND (14.9%), of whom 270,000 had EHC plans.
- At January 2019, in 80% of local authorities the percentage of school-age children with EHC plans was between 2.5% and 4.0%.
- The proportion of pupils identified as needing SEN support varied from 7.3% (in the London Borough of Havering) to 17.1% (in Blackpool).

Proportion of resident pupils aged 5 to 15 with EHC plans



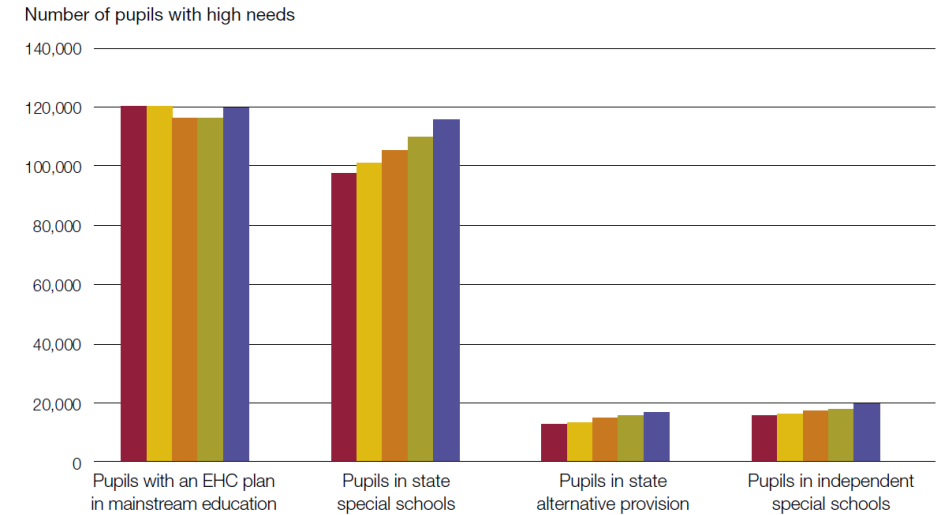
Spending exceeds budgets

- Estimated £9.4 billion funding for SEND in 2018-19 (24% of the dedicated schools grant):
 - £3.8 billion notional funding within the 'schools block'.
 - £5.6 billion for high needs.
- Local authorities have increasingly spent more than they budgeted to spend on high needs.
- Local authorities' dedicated schools grant reserves fell from £1,070 million at the start of 2014-15 to £144 million at the start of 2018-19 (86.5%).



More pupils are attending special schools

- A growing proportion of pupils with high needs are attending special schools and alternative provision.
- We estimated that, in 2017-18, the cost per place was:
 - £50,000 in independent special schools;
 - £20,500 in state special schools; and
 - up to £18,000 for pupils with EHC plans in mainstream schools

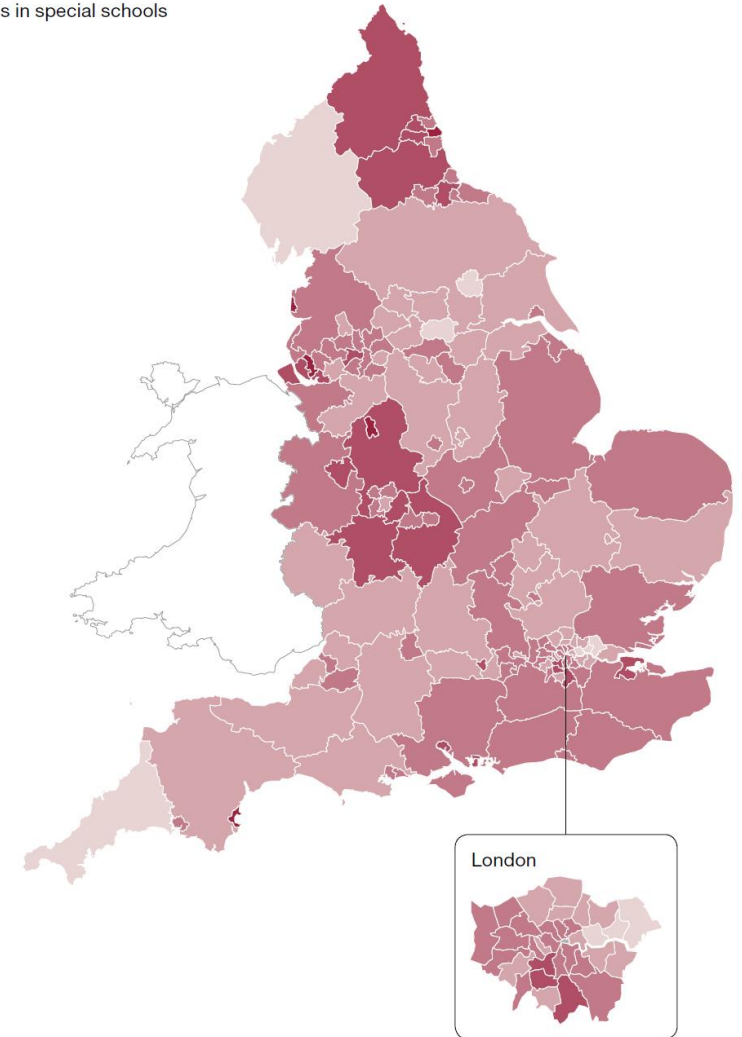
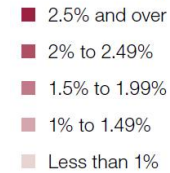


■ 2014	120,530	97,395	12,895	15,870
■ 2015	120,070	101,250	13,585	16,520
■ 2016	116,185	105,365	15,015	17,345
■ 2017	116,255	109,855	15,670	17,820
■ 2018	119,815	115,315	16,730	19,610
Change between 2014 and 2018 (%)	-0.6%	18.4%	29.7%	23.6%

Local variation – special schools

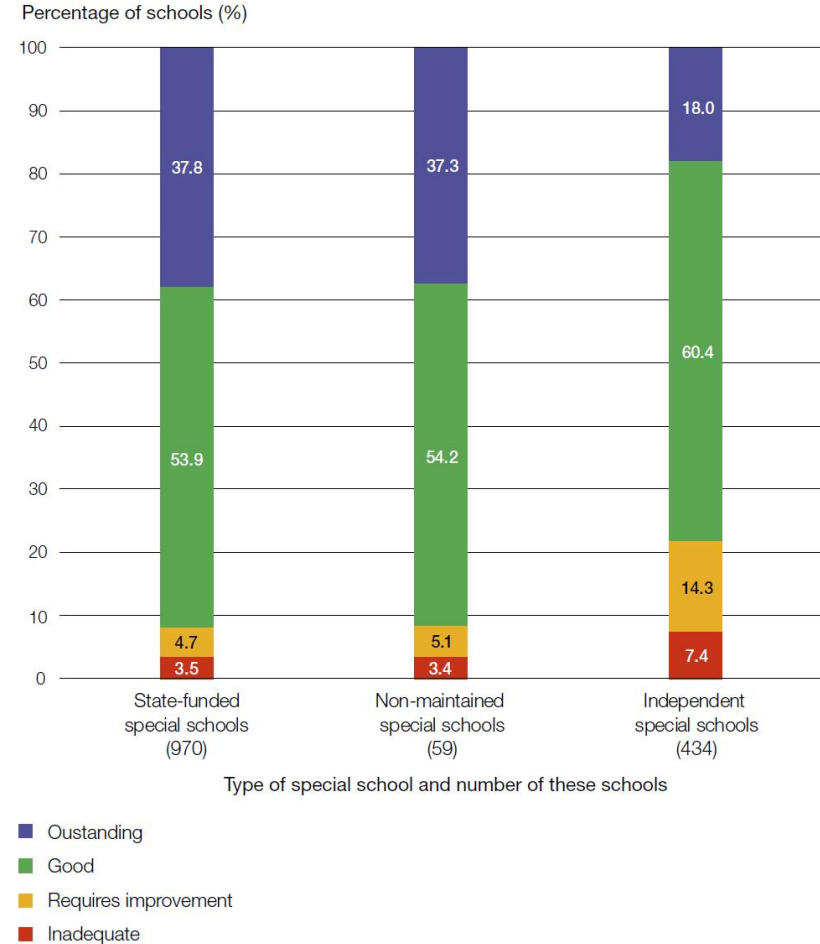
- The proportion of pupils in special schools varied considerably between local authorities
 - 0.4% (in the London Borough of Newham)
 - 2.8% (in Knowsley)(January 2018 data)

Proportion of pupils in special schools



Ofsted inspections

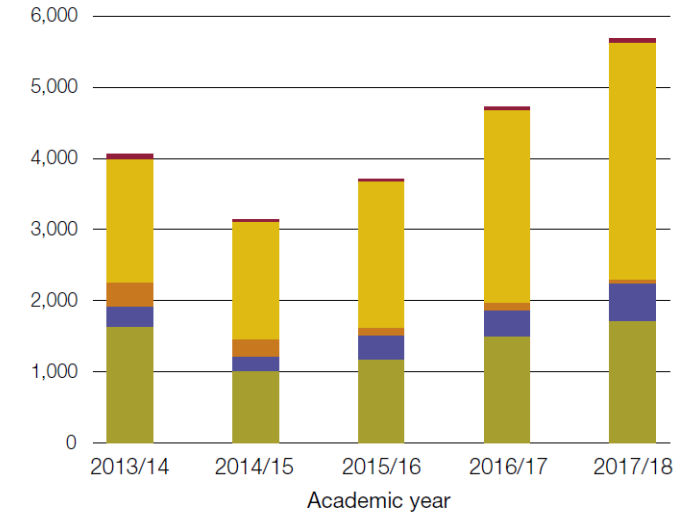
- Ofsted’s inspections indicate that the quality of state special schools is high.
- There was no specific assessment of SEND in inspections of mainstream schools, but we found gradings in full inspection reports are likely to be a fair indicator of the quality of SEND provision.
- Provision for pupils with SEND was covered too infrequently in short inspection reports.
- In 47 (50.0%) of local area inspections, Ofsted and the CQC found areas of weakness significant enough to require a written statement of action in response.



Appeals to the First-tier tribunal

- In assessing the likely benefits of the 2014 reforms, the Department expected the number of challenges to local authority decisions to fall.
- The number of appeals to the tribunal against local authority decisions has risen since 2014/15.

Number of appeals per year



	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
■ Cease to maintain statement/EHC plan	69	38	30	40	51
■ Contents of statement/EHC plan	1,742	1,648	2,061	2,712	3,329
■ Refusal to amend or re-assess statement/EHC plan	323	243	115	108	56
■ Refusal to issue statement/EHC plan	298	203	321	371	526
■ Refusal to assess for statement/EHC plan	1,631	1,015	1,185	1,494	1,717

Assessing outcomes

Intended long-term outcomes

- Higher education and/or employment.
- Independent living, with choice and control over their lives and good housing options.
- Participation in society, including having friends, supportive relationships and being part of a community.
- Being as healthy as possible.

We found that

- The Department does not have good evidence to evaluate how the support pupils receive at school prepares them for adulthood.
- Neither has it specified, in a measurable way, what good support at school would look like in terms of improving young people's ability to live independently in the long term.

In May 2020, the Committee of Public Accounts said:

- “We remain to be convinced that the Department has sufficient grip on what needs to be done to tackle the growing pressures on the SEND system.
- In September 2019, the Department announced a major review of SEND provision, promising to improve services and address what it described as the ‘postcode lottery’ that children and families often face.
- The Department has given few details about the review and has not indicated when it will be completed.
- However, the weaknesses in support for children with SEND are already well known—what we expect from the Department now is concrete action to address these significant failings.”

In July 2020, the Department agreed that it should:

- “as a matter of urgency, complete and publish its SEND review.”
- “use the data it already collects to develop a better, evidence-based understanding of why there is so much variation between different groups of children in identifying SEN.”
- “supplement inspection evidence by drawing on other information to get a rounded, timely assessment of the quality of support for children with SEND.”
- “identify how funding mechanisms can be used more effectively”
- “carry out a systematic analysis of current and future demand for school places and facilities suitable for pupils with complex needs, and develop a costed plan for meeting those needs.”

Thank you



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