



Qualification Specification



Qualification summary

Qualification title	NCFE CACHE Level 3 Award for Special Educational Needs Coordinators in Early Years Settings
Ofqual qualification number (QN)	603/3476/9
Guided learning hours (GLH)	24
Total qualification time (TQT)	34
Minimum age	16
Qualification purpose	This qualification is designed for a level 3 practitioner in a private, voluntary or independent setting. All early years providers are required to have arrangements in place to identify and support children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and to promote equality of opportunity for children in their care. This is an important role to ensure the best possible educational outcomes are achieved for children with SEND. The qualification is designed for those already working in a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) role as part of their early years practitioner role, or those who are interested in doing so. This qualification is also appropriate for childminders.
Grading	Achieved/not yet achieved
Assessment method	Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence.
Work/industry placement experience	Work/industry placement experience is not required.
UCAS	Please refer to the UCAS website for further details of points allocation and the most up-to-date information.
Performance points	Please check the performance points data produced by the Department for Education (DfE) which is available online.
Regulation information	This is a regulated qualification. The regulated number for this qualification is 603/3476/9.
Funding	This qualification may be eligible for funding. For further guidance on funding, please contact your local funding provider.



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Section 1: introduction

Centres must ensure they are using the most recent version of the Qualification Specification on the NCFE website.

Aims and objectives

This qualification aims to:

- focus on the study of the early years special educational needs coordinator (SENCo)
- offer breadth and depth of study, incorporating a key core of knowledge.

The objectives of this qualification are to:

- explore the roles and responsibilities of the SENCo in an early years setting
- understand the strategies and techniques for supporting children and their families
- increase knowledge of special educational needs (SEN) codes of practice.

Support Handbook

This Qualification Specification must be used alongside the mandatory Support Handbook, which can be found on the NCFE website. This contains additional supporting information to help with planning, delivery and assessment.

This Qualification Specification contains all the qualification-specific information you will need that is not covered in the Support Handbook.

Guidance for entry and registration

This qualification is designed for those already working in a SENCo role as part of their early years practitioner role, or those who are interested in doing so. This qualification is also appropriate for childminders.

It may also be useful to learners studying qualifications in the following areas:

- health and social care
- childhood studies
- community, youth and families
- social work
- early years
- primary teaching
- nursing.

Registration is at the discretion of the centre in accordance with equality legislation and should be made on the NCFE Portal.

There are no specific prior skills/knowledge a learner must have for this qualification. However, learners may find it helpful if they have already achieved a level 2 qualification.



Centres are responsible for ensuring that all learners are capable of achieving the units and/or learning outcomes (LOs) and complying with the relevant literacy, numeracy, and health and safety requirements.

Learners registered on this qualification should not undertake another qualification at the same level, or with the same/a similar title, as duplication of learning may affect funding eligibility.

Achieving this qualification

To be awarded this qualification, learners are required to successfully achieve **2 mandatory units**.

Please refer to the list of units in Appendix A or the unit summaries in Section 2 for further information.

To achieve this qualification, learners must successfully demonstrate their achievement of all LOs of the units as detailed in this Qualification Specification. A partial certificate may be requested for learners who do not achieve the full qualification but have achieved at least one whole unit; partial achievement certificate fees can be found in the Fees and Pricing document on the NCFE website.

Progression

Learners who achieve this qualification could progress to the following:

- further education:
 - level 4 qualifications in SEND
- higher education.

Progression to higher-level studies

Level 3 qualifications can support progression to higher-level study, which requires knowledge and skills different from those gained at levels 1 and 2. Level 3 qualifications enable learners to:

- apply factual, procedural and theoretical subject knowledge
- use relevant knowledge and methods to address complex, non-routine problems
- interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas
- understand the nature of the area of study or work
- demonstrate an awareness of different perspectives and approaches
- identify, select and use appropriate cognitive and practical skills
- review and evaluate the effectiveness of their own methods.

Resource requirements

There are no mandatory resource requirements for this qualification, but centres must ensure learners have access to suitable resources to enable them to cover all the appropriate LOs.

How the qualification is assessed

Assessment is the process of measuring a learner's skill, knowledge and understanding against the standards set in a qualification.

This qualification is internally assessed and externally quality assured.



The assessment consists of **one** component:

- an internally assessed portfolio of evidence, which is assessed by centre staff and externally quality assured by NCFE (internal quality assurance must still be completed by the centre as usual)

Learners must be successful in this component to gain the Level 3 Award for Special Educational Needs Coordinators in Early Years Settings.

Learners who are not successful can resubmit work within the registration period; however, a charge may apply in cases where additional external quality assurance visits are required.

Unless otherwise stated in this Qualification Specification, all learners taking this qualification must be assessed in English and all assessment evidence presented for external quality assurance must be in English.

Internal assessment

Each learner must create a portfolio of evidence generated from appropriate assessment tasks to demonstrate achievement of all the LOs associated with each unit. The assessment tasks should allow the learner to respond to a real-life situation that they may face when in employment. On completion of each unit, learners must declare that the work produced is their own and the assessor must countersign this.

If a centre needs to create their own internal assessment tasks, there are four essential elements in the production of successful centre-based assessment tasks; these are:

- ensuring the assessment tasks are meaningful with clear, assessable outcomes
- appropriate coverage of the content, LOs or assessment criteria (AC)
- having a valid and engaging context or scenario
- including sufficient opportunities for stretch and challenge for higher attainers.



Section 2: unit content and assessment guidance

This section provides details of the structure and content of this qualification, including grading, level, credit and guided learning hours (GLH).

The types of evidence listed are for guidance purposes only. Within learners' portfolios, other types of evidence are acceptable if all learning outcomes (LOs) are covered, and if the evidence generated can be internally and externally quality assured. For approval of methods of internal assessment other than portfolio building, please contact your external quality assurer (EQA).

The explanation of terms explains how the terms used in the unit content are applied to this qualification. This can be found in Section 3.



Unit 01 Roles and responsibilities of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator in the Early Years (A/617/1651)

Unit summary			
The aim of this unit is to explore the role of statutory guidance and how this informs the role and responsibilities of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) in an early years setting.			
Assessment			
Internally assessed via a portfolio of evidence			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 3	12 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Understand the principles, statutory guidance and legislation underpinning practice for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) in an early years setting	1.1 Explain the term Special Educational Needs and Disability in relation to statutory guidance 1.2 Outline the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice for an early years setting in line with statutory requirements
2. Understand the role of the Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)	2.1 Evaluate the role of the SENCo in private, voluntary and independent early years settings 2.2 Explain the responsibilities of the Early Years SENCo to share best practice and raise confidence of colleagues in their work with children with SEND
3. Understand partnership working for the Early Years SENCo	3.1 Explore services available for children and their families through the local offer 3.2 Describe the support available from other professionals, agencies and services to support the Early Years SENCo 3.3 Explain the role of the Early Years SENCo during transition 3.4 Explain how information sharing with others within and beyond the setting contributes to effective transition and supports achievement of agreed outcomes
4. Understand early identification and action for children with SEND	4.1 Use examples to describe each of the areas of need identified below: • communication and interaction • cognition and learning • social, emotional and mental health difficulties • sensory and/or physical needs. 4.2 Describe how high and low incidence of special educational needs (SEN) are identified 4.3 Describe characteristics of different types of special educational needs in an early years setting to include: • high incidence • low incidence. 4.4 Describe processes for identification and early action for children with SEND in an early years setting in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)



Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
	4.5 Give examples of adjustment strategies and interventions for supporting the learning of children with different types of SEN to ensure positive learning outcomes (LOs)

Range
2. Understand the role of the Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)
2.1 Role to include: - ensuring all Early Years Practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEND - ensuring all Early Years Practitioners are familiar with the setting's approach to identifying and meeting children's SEND needs - ensuring parents/carers are closely involved throughout and that their insights inform action taken by the setting - liaising with professionals and/or agencies beyond the setting - engaging with the child to gain their view. 2.2 Share best practice to include: - induction of new staff - staff responsibilities to children with SEND - setting approach to identification and meeting of SEND needs - partnership working towards agreed outcomes with parents/carers and in consultation with the child - identifying training needs and how these can be met - accessing sources of support to promote SENCo role.
3. Understand partnership working for the Early Years SENCo
3.1 Local offer including the provision of the Local Authority, of all services available to support children who are disabled or who have SEND and their families. 3.2 Other professionals, agencies and services Where appropriate learners should apply own skills to liaise with other professionals, agencies and services beyond the setting to include: - sensory support services - specialist teachers - speech and language therapist - occupational therapist - physiotherapist - Independent Advice and Support Services (IASS) - local voluntary agencies who provide support to families - social care services - area SENCo inclusion officer or equivalent where available. 3.4 Information sharing to include what information can and/or should be shared with others and how to share information with the receiving setting or school and how to involve children and their parents/carers in this.



Delivery and assessment guidance

Additional unit assessment requirements:

Must refer to [SEND Code of Practice](#).

Must refer to information provided in [The Role of the Early Years SENCo \(Special Educational Needs Coordinator\) document](#).

LO1 Learners must be able to explain legal obligations that early years providers share towards children with a disability.

For relevant delivery in Northern Ireland, please refer to:

- [The Education \(Northern Ireland\) Order](#) (1996)
- [The Special Educational Needs and Disability \(Northern Ireland\) Order](#) (2005)
- [Special Educational Needs and Disability Act \(Northern Ireland\)](#) (2016)



Unit 02 Strategies and techniques for supporting children and families (F/617/1652)

Unit summary			
The aim of this unit is for the learner to consider strategies and techniques for supporting children and their families with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) in early years settings.			
Assessment			
Internally assessed via a portfolio of evidence			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 3	12 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Understand the graduated approach in an early years setting	1.1 Describe each stage in the graduated approach cycle: • assess • plan • do • review.
	1.2 Outline how following a graduated approach provides SEND support in the early years
	1.3 Discuss ways of engaging with parents/carers, colleagues and other professionals throughout the graduated approach
	1.4 Discuss benefits to the child of parent/carer participation throughout the graduated approach to include: • confidence and wellbeing • improved social skills • holistic condition improvement.
	1.5 Analyse the reviewing processes for progress monitoring and action planning to inform practice within the graduated approach
2. Understand English as an additional language (EAL)	2.1 Explain the needs of children with EAL in an early years setting
	2.2 Explain the needs of children with EAL and SEND in the early years
3. Understand Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans	3.1 Describe the principles underpinning EHC plans
	3.2 Analyse clear goal setting for effective EHC plans
	3.3 Explain record keeping for best practice in tracking progress for children in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Local Authority requirements
4. Be able to practice as a reflective Early Years Practitioner	4.1 Develop a skills gap analysis against the Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) job description
	4.2 Reflect on own practice to identify professional development opportunities, training and support needs for Early Years SENCo role
	4.3 Explore funding implications in relation to SEND for the Early Years SENCo

Range
1. Understand the graduated approach in an early years setting
1.3 Colleagues must include key worker, practitioner colleagues and explain their role within the cycle.



Delivery and assessment guidance

Additional unit assessment requirements:

Must refer to [SEND Code of Practice](#).

Must refer to information provided in [The Role of the Early Years SENCo \(Special Educational Needs Coordinator\) document](#).

LO1 AC1.1 The learners must consider the purpose and value of observation and how these observations inform each stage within the graduated approach. Consider methods and the appropriateness of observation.

LO2 The learners should be able to discriminate rate and pace with regard to EAL and SEN as well as being able to identify when SEN is occurring, not related to EAL.

LO3 Teaching around EHC plans must include any support plans generated to enhance the holistic health, development and learning of individual children.

LO4 AC4.3 Link with the local authority to liaise over individual children and links on wider strategic issues such as securing sufficient expertise and experience on SEN and disability locally.

For relevant delivery in Northern Ireland, please refer to:

- [The Education \(Northern Ireland\) Order](#) (1996)
- [The Special Educational Needs and Disability \(Northern Ireland\) Order](#) (2005)
- [Special Educational Needs and Disability Act \(Northern Ireland\)](#) (2016)



NCFE assessment strategy

The key requirements of the assessment strategies or principles that relate to units in this qualification are summarised below.

The centre must ensure that individuals undertaking assessor or quality assurer roles within the centre conform to the assessment requirements for the unit they are assessing or quality assuring.

Knowledge LOs

- assessors will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make assessment decisions
- internal quality assurers (IQAs) will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions

Competence/skills LOs

- assessors will need to be both occupationally competent and qualified to make assessment decisions
- IQAs will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions

The centre with which the learners are registered will be responsible for making all assessment decisions. Assessors must be **contracted** to work directly with the centre, contributing to all aspects of standardisation. The centre must ensure a process of training is followed, including during induction and quality assurance activities. Occupationally competent and qualified assessors from the centre must use direct observation to assess practical skills-based outcomes.

For this qualification, the centre must use the further information relating to adult care, childcare and health/early years educator/early years practitioner assessment principles, which can be found within the mandatory Support Handbook.



Section 3: explanation of terms

This table explains how the terms used at **level 3** in the unit content are applied to this qualification (not all verbs are used in this qualification).

Apply	Explain how existing knowledge can be linked to new or different situations in practice.
Analyse	Break down the subject into separate parts and examine each part. Show how the main ideas are related and why they are important. Reference to current research or theory may support the analysis.
Clarify	Explain the information in a clear, concise way.
Classify	Organise according to specific criteria.
Collate	Collect and present information arranged in sequential or logical order.
Compare	Examine the subjects in detail and consider the similarities and differences.
Critically compare	This is a development of 'compare' where the learner considers the positive aspects and limitations of the subject.
Consider	Think carefully and write about a problem, action or decision.
Create	Make or produce an artefact as required.
Demonstrate	Show an understanding by describing or applying knowledge in a practical context.
Describe	Write about the subject giving detailed information in a logical way.
Develop (a plan/idea)	Expand a plan or idea by adding more detail and/or depth of information.
Diagnose	Identify the cause based on valid evidence.
Differentiate	Identify the differences between two or more things.
Discuss	Write a detailed account giving a range of views or opinions.
Distinguish	Explain the difference between two or more items, resources, pieces of information.
Draw conclusions	Make a final decision or judgement based on reasons.
Estimate	Form an approximate opinion or judgement using previous knowledge or considering other information.



Evaluate	Examine strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and differences. Judge the evidence from the different perspectives and make a valid conclusion or reasoned judgement. Reference to current research or theory may support the evaluation.
Explain	Provide detailed information about the subject with reasons showing how or why. Responses could include examples to support these reasons.
Extrapolate	Use existing knowledge to predict possible outcomes that might be outside the norm.
Identify	Recognise and name the main points accurately (some description may also be necessary to gain higher marks when using compensatory marking).
Implement	Explain how to put an idea or plan into action.
Interpret	Explain the meaning of something.
Judge	Form an opinion or make a decision.
Justify	Give a satisfactory explanation for actions or decisions.
Perform	Carry out a task or process to meet the requirements of the question.
Plan	Think about and organise information in a logical way using an appropriate format.
Provide	Identify and give relevant and detailed information in relation to the subject.
Reflect	Learners should consider their actions, experiences or learning and the implications of this for their practice and/or professional development.
Review and revise	Look back over the subject and make corrections or changes.
Select	Make an informed choice for a specific purpose.
State	Give the main points clearly in sentences or paragraphs.
Summarise	Give the main ideas or facts in a concise way.
Test	Complete a series of checks utilising a set procedure.



Section 4: support

Support materials

The following support materials are available to assist with the delivery of this qualification and are available on the NCFE website:

- Qualification Factsheet.

Useful websites

Centres may find the following websites helpful for information, materials and resources to assist with the delivery of this qualification:

- [SEND Code of Practice](#)
- [The Role of the Early Years SENCo \(Special Educational Needs Coordinator\) document](#)
- [The Education \(Northern Ireland\) Order](#) (1996)
- [The Special Educational Needs and Disability \(NI\) Order](#) (2005)
- [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(NI\) Act](#) (2016)

These links are provided as sources of potentially useful information for delivery/learning of this subject area. NCFE does not explicitly endorse these websites or any learning resources available on these websites. For official NCFE-endorsed learning resources, please see the additional and teaching materials sections on the qualification's page on the NCFE website.

Other support materials

The resources and materials used in the delivery of this qualification must be age-appropriate and due consideration should be given to the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners in line with your institute's safeguarding policy when developing or selecting delivery materials.

Products to support the delivery of this qualification may be available. For more information about these resources and how to access them, please visit the NCFE website.

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Appendix A: units

To simplify cross-referencing assessments and quality assurance, we have used a sequential numbering system in this document for each unit.

 Knowledge-only units are indicated by a star. If a unit is not marked with a star, it is a skills unit or contains a mix of knowledge and skills.

Mandatory units



Unit number	Regulated unit number	Unit title	Level	GLH
Unit 01	A/617/1651	Roles and responsibilities of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator in the Early Years	3	12
Unit 02	F/617/1652	Strategies and techniques for supporting children and families	3	12

The units above may be available as stand-alone unit programmes. Please visit the NCFE website for further information.



Change history record

Version	Publication date	Description of change
v1.1	February 2020	Information regarding the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners added to Resource requirements .
v1.2	February 2022	Additional guidance for delivery/updated links have been provided within the 2 units in line with revisions to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) criteria published January 2022. This is to ensure that our qualification continues to reflect current thinking.
v1.3	June 2022	Further information added to the qualification summary – assessment requirements section to confirm that unless otherwise stated in this specification, all learners taking this qualification must be assessed in English and all assessment evidence presented for external quality assurance must be in English. Information added to the qualification summary – entry requirements/recommendations section to advise that registration is at the discretion of the centre, in accordance with equality legislation and should be made on the Portal. Information added to the mandatory documents section about how to access support handbooks.
v1.4	October 2023	Information regarding UCAS points added to Section 2 About these qualifications, Qualification Summary. Updated Assessment strategies and principles added to Section 4: assessment and quality assurance information.
v2.0	July 2026	New specification template. Non-mandatory internal assessment task removed from specification. Information regarding Northern Ireland added to delivery and assessment guidance sections in Unit 01 and Unit 02.