



Qualification Specification



Qualification summary

Qualification title	NCFE CACHE Level 2 Technical Specialist for the Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator Assistant (Award)
Ofqual qualification number (QN)	610/4540/8
Guided learning hours (GLH)	35
Total qualification time (TQT)	45
Minimum age	16
Qualification purpose	This additional specialist qualification is designed for those working as early years practitioners supporting the role of the early years special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCo). The qualification will explore how the SENDCo assistant works with babies, children, colleagues and others when supporting the SENDCo, in an early years setting with adherence to legislation and guidance. This qualification requires achievement of both knowledge and skills.
Grading	Achieved/not yet achieved
Assessment method	Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence
Work/industry placement experience	The learner must be working within an early years setting to be able to meet the assessment requirements of this qualification.
Occupational standards	This qualification builds on the outcomes within the Early Years Practitioner occupational standard (ST0888). The specialist duties have been written to build upon the knowledge, skills and behaviours in the Early Years Practitioner standard. 1. Advocate for babies and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in line with statutory guidelines and appropriate legislation. 2. Promote child-centred pedagogy through a graduated approach. 3. Ensure effective collaboration with others in your role as special educational needs co-ordinator assistant to support babies and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and their families.
Regulation information	This is a regulated qualification. The regulated number for this qualification is 610/4540/8
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 needs of babies and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

The objectives of this qualifications are to:

- introduce the roles of the special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCo) and the SENDCo assistant
- raise awareness of the role of the early years practitioner when supporting the individual needs of babies and children with SEND

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 working as early years practitioners supporting the role of the early years SENDCo. This qualification builds on the outcomes within the Early Years Practitioner occupational standard (ST0888).

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

- teaching and learning
- early years
- special educational needs

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

Learners must be aged 16 or above to undertake this qualification and be working within an early years setting. 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 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 **two units** from the 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.

Age range covered by the qualification

This qualification relates to working with children in early years settings, from birth to five years of age, for early years practitioners.

Progression including job roles

Learners who achieve this qualification could progress to the following:

- employment:
 - SENDCo assistant in an early years setting
- further education:
 - special educational needs
 - teaching and learning

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.

Realistic work environment (RWE) requirement/recommendation

The assessment of competence-based criteria should ideally be conducted within the workplace. However, in instances where this is not feasible, learners can be assessed in a realistic work environment (RWE) designed to replicate real work settings.

It is essential for organisations utilising an RWE to ensure it accurately reflects current and authentic work environments. By doing so, employers can be confident that competence demonstrated by a learner in an RWE will be translated into successful performance in employment.



In establishing an RWE, the following factors should be considered.

The work situation being represented is relevant to the competence requirements being assessed:

- the work situation should closely resemble the relevant setting
- equipment and resources that replicate the work situation must be current and available for use to ensure that assessment requirements can be met
- time constraints, resource access and information availability should mirror real conditions

The learner's work activities reflect those found in the work environment being represented, for example:

- interaction with colleagues and others should reflect expected communication approaches
- tasks performed must be completed to an acceptable timescale
- learners must be able to achieve a realistic volume of work as would be expected in the work situation being represented
- learners operate professionally with clear understanding of their work activities and responsibilities
- feedback from colleagues and others (for example customers, service users) is maintained and acted upon
- account must be taken of any legislation, regulations or standard procedures that would be followed in the workplace

Work/industry placement experience

The learner must be working within an early years setting to be able to meet the assessment requirements of this qualification.

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 2 Technical Specialist for the Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator Assistant (Award).

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 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

We have created some sample tasks for the two internally assessed units, which can be found within a separate document in the member's area of the NCFE website. These tasks are not mandatory. You can contextualise these tasks to suit the needs of your learners to help them build up their portfolio of evidence. The tasks have been designed to cover some LOs for two units and provide opportunities for stretch and challenge. For further information about contextualising the tasks, please contact the Provider Development team.

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 five 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)
- ensuring that safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion are considered in their task design
- having a valid and engaging context or scenario
- including sufficient opportunities for stretch and challenge for higher attainers

It is expected that centre-devised tasks are reviewed by the centre and are comparable to both industry standards and standardised across centres. This will reduce predictability.

Group and collaborative working

Where group working can be helpful for manageability, learner output and assessment **must** still be carried out on an individual basis. There is no scope for **group assessment** within qualifications.

Learners can collaborate to research / carry out preparatory work. Each learner must write up their own account of the task, using their own words; for example, this could be in the form of a self-reflection. Learners will be individually assessed against the criteria.

A centre can observe learners as a group, but each learner is required to have their own evidence in terms of what they produced for the task. An individual observation record should also be completed for each learner to clearly show what the learner did in the assessment and how they performed.

Where group tasks are appropriate, centres should make it clear how the groups are to be formed and give learners some autonomy in the formation of those groups where practical. If a cohort has an insufficient number of learners, then cohorts can be formed using mixed groups of learners or the role of learners can be performed by other appropriate adults.

Measures to ensure sufficient individual evidence is generated for assessment purposes:

- AC being evidenced are clear for each individual within the group
- clear role definition from the outset to align with the evidence required by each learner for the task



- encouraging the use of journals or logs to record progress and monitor contributions across the group
- training group members on carrying out fair and valid self and peer assessment
- use of peer assessment and self-assessment to evaluate their own and others' contributions
- ensuring appropriate supervision by the assessor

The assessor/quality assurer will need to be able to see how **each** learner being assessed has contributed and met the LOs.



Section 2: unit content and assessment guidance

This section provides details of the structure and content of this qualification.

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 Early intervention for improved holistic development in babies and children in an early years setting (L/651/2595)

Unit summary			
This unit provides the knowledge and understanding of holistic development in babies and children and explores the role of the special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCo) assistant in an early years setting for early intervention.			
Assessment			
This unit is internally assessed via a portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 2	15 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Understand holistic development in babies and children	1.1 Identify normative patterns of development in babies and children from birth to 5 years 1.2 Explain factors impacting a baby's or child's holistic development and why they may not meet developmental expectations
2. Understand the role of the SENDCo assistant for early intervention in babies and children in an early years setting	2.1 Define the term 'early intervention' for babies and children 2.2 Describe processes followed by the SENDCo assistant when emerging concerns are identified regarding development in babies and children 2.3 Outline ongoing assessment and monitoring activities implemented by the SENDCo assistant for babies' and children's progress 2.4 Explain the significance of early intervention for babies' and children's outcomes
3. Understand policy and procedures to support best outcomes for babies and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in an early years setting	3.1 Outline local SEND offer to support early intervention for babies and young children 3.2 Discuss how the local SEND offer is implemented in policy and procedure 3.3 Identify the stages of the graduated approach 3.4 Describe ways the graduated approach supports early intervention for best outcomes for babies and children
4. Be able to work with others to meet the individual needs of babies and young children in an early years setting	4.1 Demonstrate effective communication with the SENDCo to advocate for the individual needs of babies and children in an early years setting 4.2 Explain the importance of valuing the voice of a baby and child 4.3 Demonstrate the ability to capture the voice of the baby or child 4.4 Describe ways of engaging with parents and/or carers when supporting babies and children with SEND 4.5 Demonstrate the ability to support parents and/or carers to be actively involved in decisions impacting their child's care, play, learning and development



Range
1. Understand holistic development in babies and children
1.1 Normative patterns The learner must consider: • physical development • communication and language • personal, social and emotional development
1.2 Factors The learner must consider: • genetic • environmental • social
2. Understand the role of the SENDCo assistant for early intervention in babies and children in an early years setting
2.3 Ongoing assessment and monitoring activities The learner must consider: • 2-year progress check • early learning goal at end of reception • reception baseline assessment • graduated approach
3. Understand policy and procedures to support best outcomes for babies and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in an early years setting
3.4 Early intervention The learner must consider: • early help assessment (EHA) • education, health and care (EHC) plan • health visitor referrals



Delivery and assessment guidance

AC1.1 Learners must refer to the [Development Matters](#) document.

AC1.2 Learners must consider at least one factor from each point in the range. Learners must also consider how attachment impacts babies' and children's holistic development.

AC2.2 Learners must describe the steps to take when a concern is identified, including communicating with the relevant people.

AC2.3 Learners must be aware of their organisation's safety procedures and data protection policy when sharing information, including digital and non-digital forms.

AC3.2 Learners must refer to their setting's own policies and procedures.

AC3.3 Learners must refer to the [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years \(gov.uk\)](#).

AC4.3 Learners must demonstrate at least three different ways to capture the voice of a baby or child, including both verbal and non-verbal communication.

AC4.4 Learners must explain how they can support families with the home learning environment.

AC4.5 Learners must either demonstrate they have supported a family on more than one occasion or supported multiple families.

AC4.1, AC4.3 and AC4.5 must be assessed via direct observation of learner by assessor.



Unit 02 Maintaining an inclusive learning environment for babies and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in an early years setting (M/651/2596)

Unit summary			
This unit provides an opportunity for reflective practice promoting increased understanding of the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice for an inclusive learning environment in an early years setting.			
Assessment			
This unit is internally assessed via a portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 2	20 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1 Understand the SEND Code of Practice and how it relates to working with children and babies with SEND	1.1 State the relevant areas of statutory guidance in relation to the care and education of babies and children with SEND
	1.2 Define the four areas of need in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice
2 Understand the role of the special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCo) and SENDCo assistant in an early years setting	2.1 Outline the roles and responsibilities of the SENDCo in an early years setting
	2.2 Explain ways the SENDCo assistant can support the SENDCo for improved outcomes in an early years setting
3 Be able to work in partnership for best outcomes for babies and children with SEND	3.1 Identify professionals involved in partnership working
	3.2 Explain benefits of collaborative partnership working
	3.3 Discuss factors impacting effective partnership working
	3.4 Demonstrate effective partnership working
4 Be able to facilitate a safe, enabling inclusive environment in an early years setting	4.1 Reflect on an area of provision within an early years setting to make recommendations for improved practice
	4.2 Explain how early years professionals facilitate a safe, enabling environment to meet the individual needs of babies and children
	4.3 Demonstrate how to promote child-centred pedagogy through a graduated approach
	4.4 Discuss the effectiveness of specialist aids, resources and equipment available for babies and children with SEND
5 Be able to reflect on own professional development needs	5.1 Identify own professional development needs
	5.2 Create a professional development plan in preparation for supervision



Range

1. Understand the SEND Code of Practice and how it relates to working with children and babies with SEND

1.1 Statutory guidance

The learner must consider the following documents:

- [Role description of the early years special educational needs co-ordinator \(SENCo\) \(gov.uk\)](#)
- [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years \(gov.uk\)](#)
- [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework \(gov.uk\)](#)

Delivery and assessment guidance

AC2.1 Learners must refer to the [Role description of the early years special educational needs co-ordinator \(SENCo\) \(gov.uk\)](#) document.

AC3.1 Learners must identify at least five different professionals, including multi agency teams.

AC4.1 Learners must investigate one of the following areas of the provision:

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)
- sensory and/or physical needs

Learners could explore sustainability through adaptive pedagogy. The following resource may be useful: [early years sustainability resource \(NCFE\)](#)

AC4.2 Learners must refer to the [keeping children safe in education \(gov.uk\)](#) document.

AC4.4 Learners must consider at least one specialist aid, resource or type of equipment from each of the following:

- communication and interaction
- cognition and learning
- SEMH
- sensory and/or physical needs

AC3.4 and **AC4.3** must be assessed via direct observation of learner by assessor.



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 whom 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 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 2** in the unit content are applied to this qualification (not all verbs are used in this qualification).

Apply	Link existing knowledge to new or different situations.
Assess	Consider information in order to make decisions.
Classify	Organise according to specific criteria.
Compare	Examine the subjects in detail looking at similarities and differences.
Define	State the meaning of a word or phrase.
Demonstrate	Show an understanding of the subject or how to apply skills in a practical situation.
Describe	Write about the subject giving detailed information.
Differentiate	Give the differences between two or more things.
Discuss	Write an account giving more than one view or opinion.
Distinguish	Show or recognise the difference between items/ideas/information.
Estimate	Give an approximate decision or opinion using previous knowledge.
Explain	Provide details about the subject with reasons showing how or why. Some responses could include examples.
Give (positive and negative points)	Provide information showing the advantages and disadvantages of the subject.
Identify	List or name the main points. (Some description may also be necessary to gain higher marks when using compensatory marking).
Illustrate	Give clear information using written examples, pictures or diagrams.
List	Make a list of key words, sentences or comments that focus on the subject.
Perform	Do something (take an action/follow an instruction) that the question or task asks or requires.
Plan	Think about and organise information in a logical way. This could be presented as written information, a diagram, an illustration or other suitable format.
Provide	Give relevant information about a subject.
Reflect	Learners should look back on their actions, experiences or learning and think about how this could inform their future practice.



Select	Choose for a specific purpose.
Show	Supply sufficient evidence to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.
State	Give the main points clearly in sentences.
Use	Take or apply an item, resource or piece of information as asked in the question or task.



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
- Sample Assessment Tasks

Useful websites

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

- [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years \(gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-and-disability-code-of-practice-0-to-25-years)
- [Role description of the early years special educational needs co-ordinator \(SENCo\) \(gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/role-description-of-the-early-years-special-educational-needs-co-ordinator)
- [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework \(gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs-statutory-framework)
- [early years sustainability resource \(NCFE\)](https://www.ncfe.org.uk/early-years-sustainability-resource)
- [keeping children safe in education \(gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education)
- [A Celebratory Approach to SEND assessment in the Early Years \(Pen Green\)](https://www.pen-green.co.uk/a-celebratory-approach-to-send-assessment-in-the-early-years)

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	L/651/2595	Early intervention for improved holistic development in babies and children in an early years setting	2	15
Unit 02	M/651/2596	Maintaining an inclusive learning environment for babies and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in an early years setting	2	20

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
1.0	August 2025	First publication
v1.1	November 2025	- Information added to 'Internal assessment' section around consideration for safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion - Additional section added: 'Group and collaborative working'