

# Fundamentals of Special Needs Education in North Rhine-Westphalia- ENGLISCH

**Special needs education generally occurs in general education. In deviation to this, parents can choose a special needs school.**

*(Ausbildungsordnung sonderpädagogische Förderung [Training Regulations Special Needs Education] – AO-SF §1(1))*

Support for pupils with special educational needs in general schools and special needs schools is generally equivalent. However, there are differences in the conditions and the manner of implementation:

Support in general schools and joint learning (JL)	Support in special needs schools
<p>In JL, children with and without special educational needs learn together in a general school.</p> <p>Children with support priorities <i>vision, hearing, communication and language, physical and motor development as well as emotional and social development</i> are usually taught with the same objectives <b>in the respective general school programme</b>. This means that they are subject to the policies and performance requirements of primary school or the respective school-type-specific secondary education. They receive the support their specific disability requires and, if necessary, compensations for disadvantages.</p> <p>However, it may also occur that a more or less differentiated programme for learning or mental development may additionally be defined for children with these support priorities.</p> <p>Children with support priorities <i>learning or mental development</i> are taught in <b>educational programmes with differentiated objectives</b>. They learn together with the other children in their class and, as far as possible, about the same topics. However, the learning objectives and requirements are adapted to their respective capabilities.</p> <p>The performance evaluation takes into account individual efforts and learning progress and usually takes place in the form of a description and without grades.</p> <p><b>Objective-differentiated support in general education usually results in separate qualifications</b> from the learning or mental development programmes. In addition, a secondary school certificate may also be possible in the learning programme.</p>	<p>Special needs schools differ according to the nature of their special needs education and their offer of educational programmes. <b>In each case, they only accept children in one or a few specific support priorities.</b> Support is usually provided in smaller classes and the schools have specialized equipment. This has advantages and disadvantages:</p> <p>Under certain circumstances, the special needs school offers fewer opportunities to socialize with and benefit from pupils without support needs from their own living environment. However, children and adolescents with support needs learn in a school that is more focused and specialized in their particular needs.</p> <p>The choice of a special needs school may always offer a sensible alternative; the decision should be considered carefully.</p> <p>A distinction is also made in special needs schools between <b>same-objective and objective-differentiated educational programmes</b>. With same-objective support, general education school-leaving qualifications can be achieved.</p> <p><b>Objective-differentiated support usually results in separate qualifications from the learning or mental development programmes.</b></p> <p>In addition, a secondary school certificate may also be possible in the learning programme.</p>



## Process of determining special educational needs

As soon as you enrol your child, you as a parent can submit a request to the school to check special educational needs. At this point in time, a school principal may only do this with your consent. Later, a request can be made either by you as a parent or by the school. This is usually possible up to and including the 6th class.

In both cases, the procedure for determining special educational needs is performed in accordance with the specifications of the Training Regulations Special Needs Education (AO-SF):

1. There will be a **meeting between you as a guardian and the class teacher and/or school management**. Thereafter, you or the school management **apply to begin the procedure**.
2. The responsible school inspectorate examines the application. If the procedure commences, a general education schoolteacher (usually your child's class teacher) and a special education teacher will be instructed to review your child's special educational needs and to present them in a **report**. For this purpose, the review team performs a **medical history, as well as conduct or lesson observations and various standardized or informal test procedures**. The two teachers are required to also have a meeting with you. **During this, they will inform you about the procedure and the interim results**. It is imperative that you make use of this offer.
3. **If necessary, a school medical examination** is arranged. In this case, make sure to go to this examination appointment, which the health department will inform you of!
4. The two **teachers will explain the content of the educational report to you and ask for your comments**. You can also **discuss with them the question of whether it would make sense for your child to go to a special needs school** and, if necessary, have a corresponding request recorded. **A protocol of this meeting is always an integral part of the report**.
5. The responsible **school inspectorate decides on the necessity of special needs support, the support priority or priorities and, if necessary, the need for objective-differentiated support** based on the reports. In order to reach an agreement supporting your child in future, the school inspectorate may once again have a meeting with you, to which you may be accompanied by a person you trust.



6. The **school inspectorate will inform you of the decision in writing** and will suggest a general school that has a joint learning offer. If you would like your child to go to a special needs school, a special needs school will be suggested to you. Unless it is the school your child currently attends, you should immediately **enrol your child at the proposed school**. Enrolment in

another general school that has joint learning is possible in principle. However, schools can only accommodate pupils with special educational needs within their capacities and only after consultation with the school inspectorate and school authorities.

7. At least **once a year, the class conference will check** whether your child's determined **necessity of special needs support** and the specified support priority still exist. If changes or the termination of special needs support are appropriate, the school will invite you to a meeting and take appropriate action.

If you still have questions after consulting the school management, the class team and, if applicable, special education teachers working at your school, you are welcome to contact the school authority in the Ennepe-Ruhr district.