

# Time to Nurture

## Responding to the social-emotional development crisis in our schools

Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties are on the rise for pupils across England's schools.<sup>1</sup>

Yet too often, the causes of these difficulties remain unidentified and unaddressed<sup>2 3</sup>- meaning many children are unable to achieve and thrive at school.

This report, spanning 2017/18 to 2023/24, draws on the largest dataset on pupil social-emotional development in England, based on over 850,000 Boxall Profile® Online assessments completed for almost half a million pupils (482,813).

Our findings suggest that identifying and addressing children's social-emotional development needs is associated with better pupil wellbeing, behaviour and ability to learn.

Despite this, schools are not currently required, supported or incentivised to assess these foundational needs - or understand and respond to them.

1. [Special Educational Needs in England, Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england)

2. [Identifying SEND, Education Policy Institute](https://www.educationpolicyinstitute.org.uk/identifying-send)

3. [Now you see us report, nurtureuk](https://www.nurtureuk.org/now-you-see-us-report)



**“I find it really hard to imagine how you could develop inclusive practice unless nurture is absolutely at the heart of it.”**

Lucy Stephen, Director of Learning Support,  
Homewood School and  
Sixth Form Centre

# Findings and recommendations

## Our key findings:

- Social-emotional development needs are widespread and often hidden.
- Using nurtureuk tools and interventions to identify and address pupils' social-emotional development needs is associated with improved behaviour and attendance, and reduced suspensions and exclusions.

## Our recommendations for Government:

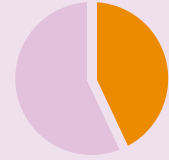
Ensure schools have the support they need to identify and address pupils' social-emotional development needs.

- Reduce the cost of lost learning and enable early intervention by funding universal social-emotional assessment in schools, supported by DfE statutory guidance.
- Tackle escalating costs associated with pupil exclusion by investing in effective whole-school nurturing approaches.

The report presents data on the levels of social-emotional development needs in schools nationwide, and builds on previous nurtureuk research from 2018.

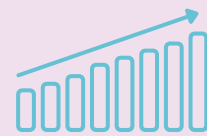
**The need to nurture our children's social and emotional development has never been more urgent.**

The full report offers a clear, practical two-step approach already working in thousands of schools: identify social-emotional development needs early, and respond through inclusive, relational practice. Real change begins when we understand each child's unique needs - and act on them.



**43%**

of pupils have moderate or high social-emotional needs



Since 2018, the proportion of pupils with high social-emotional needs has risen by

**60%**

Based on Boxall Profile® Online assessment data spanning 2017/18 - 2023/24

**[Read the full report here!](#)**

