

Summer schemes 2026

FAQ

General questions

Will special schools' summer schemes run in 2026?

No. The Education Authority (EA) has concluded that it will not be possible to run summer schemes in special schools in 2026 due to significant risks related to healthcare provision for children and young people attending the schemes.

Why have the summer schemes been cancelled?

The decision is based solely on the health and safety of the children and young people attending the schemes. If the schemes cannot be safe, we cannot proceed with them.

Is this decision related to funding cuts?

No. This is a decision based solely on safety and risk.

Why were schemes possible in 2025 but not 2026?

Although many schools successfully ran schemes in 2025, the healthcare situation has become more complex and health and safety cannot be guaranteed. No sustainable solutions have been identified for 2026.

Could the decision change later in the year?

No. It is no longer possible to find solutions for 2026, given the timescales, and the decision is final for this year.

Information for me and my family

What specific healthcare issues are affecting the decision?

EA has been unable to secure solutions for adequate health and social care provision for safe health and social care interventions, and appropriate training/delegation for staff, challenges which increase during the summer with less experienced staff available.

My child doesn't have additional healthcare needs, why can't they attend the scheme?

Summer schemes in special schools need to offer equitable provision for their pupils.

Is EA responsible for Respite provision?

No, the Education Authority is responsible for the delivery of statutory education of children and young people with special educational needs throughout the school year.

Information about my child's school

Are principals or individual schools responsible for this decision?

No. This is an EA decision and not made by any principal or school.

Can alternative Schemes or Provision be run in special schools this year?

EA will not be providing funding, staffing, transport or governance for summer schemes run in special schools this year. Other interested bodies such as partners from the Charitable and Voluntary Sector, parents organisations and others can request to host provision through the Community Use of Schools Policy. The EA welcomes working with others to make such arrangements come to fruition.

The way ahead

Will summer schemes return in future years?

EA remains committed to developing long-term solutions to ensure equity and equality for children and young people with SEND. As part of the aim is to ensure inclusion for all, out-of-hours opportunities for children and young people with SEND should be provided as it is to their peers.

By working closely with health and social care partners, EA aims to address ongoing healthcare challenges. If solutions can be found, EA believes that improvements in staffing, leadership, and governance arrangements are achievable, with a view to establishing a new model of provision moving ahead.

Ways I can contact EA

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