



# **Understanding the Progress of Our EHCP Pupils in Medway: Phonics Screening Check Results**

*A Comparison with National Peers (2018/19 to 2023/24)*

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**Date:** September 8, 2025

Source: UK Department for Education. (2024). Phonics Screening Check.  
Retrieved from [explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/...](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/)

# Purpose of Analysis

- To analyse the attainment and progress of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in the Phonics Screening Check (PSC) from 2018/19 to 2023/24.
- To benchmark Medway's performance against national average for EHCP pupils.
- Source: Analysis based on official data from the Department for Education's Explore Education Statistics service

## Key Questions We Will Answer:

1. What is the trend in Medway's EHCP pupil phonics attainment over the last six years?
2. How does Medway's performance compare to the national average for EHCP pupils?
3. What can we learn from this data to inform future strategy and support?

## Agenda for Today:

- ❖ National Context for EHCP Pupils
- ❖ Medway's EHCP Performance Trend
- ❖ The Medway vs. National Gap Analysis
- ❖ Key Insights & Recommendations

# Why Phonics & Why EHCP Pupils?

## The Critical Importance of Phonics:

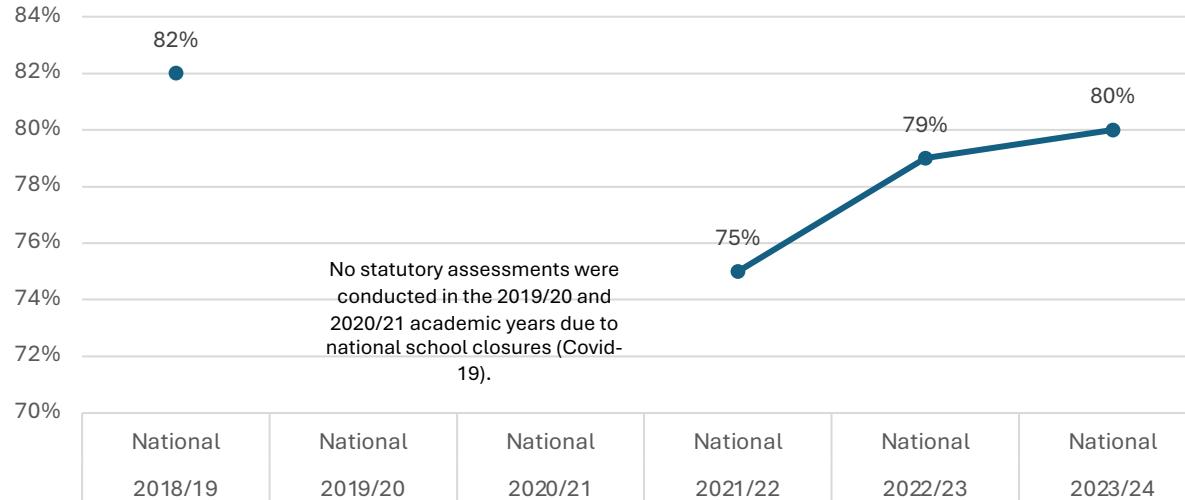
- ❖ **Foundation for Literacy:** Phonics mastery is the primary building block for reading, writing, and spelling. Success here is a key predictor of future academic achievement.
- ❖ **Gateway to Learning:** Strong literacy skills unlock access to all subjects, from Maths to Science to History.
- ❖ **Life Outcomes:** Literacy impacts employment, independence, and lifelong well-being.

## Why Focus on EHCP Pupils Specifically?

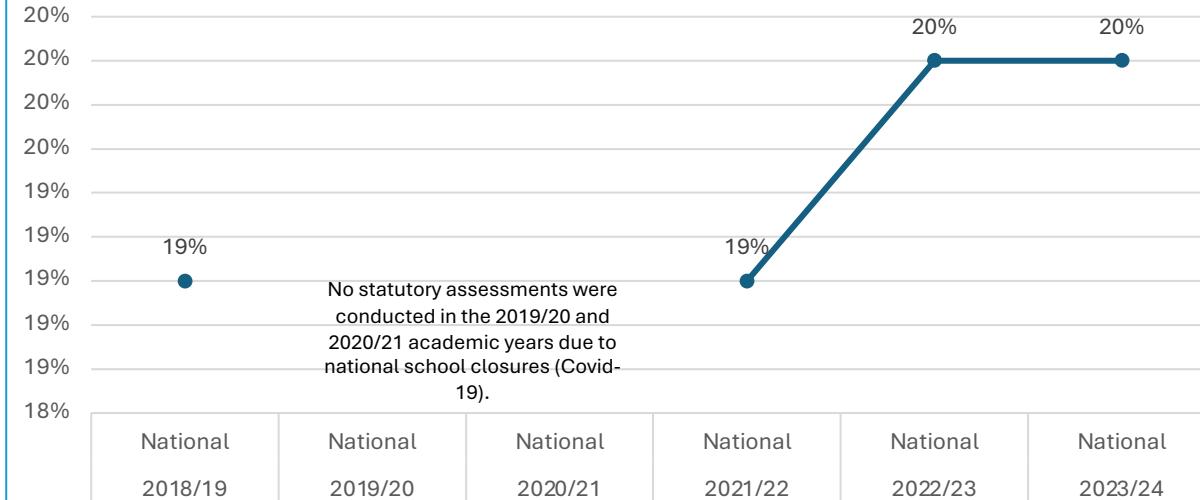
- ❖ **Our Most Vulnerable Learners:** Pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan have identified, significant, and complex needs. Their progress is a key measure of our system's equity and effectiveness.
- ❖ **Closing the Attainment Gap:** The performance gap between pupils with SEND and their peers is a national priority. Tracking this data helps us target support and measure our impact in closing that gap.
- ❖ **A Test of Our Systems:** Their success shows the effectiveness of interventions, specialist support, and inclusive teaching practices.

# National Context (England EHCP Pupils)

National Trend: All Pupils Meeting the Phonics Standard



National Trend: EHCP Pupils Meeting the Phonics Standard



## Key Trend:

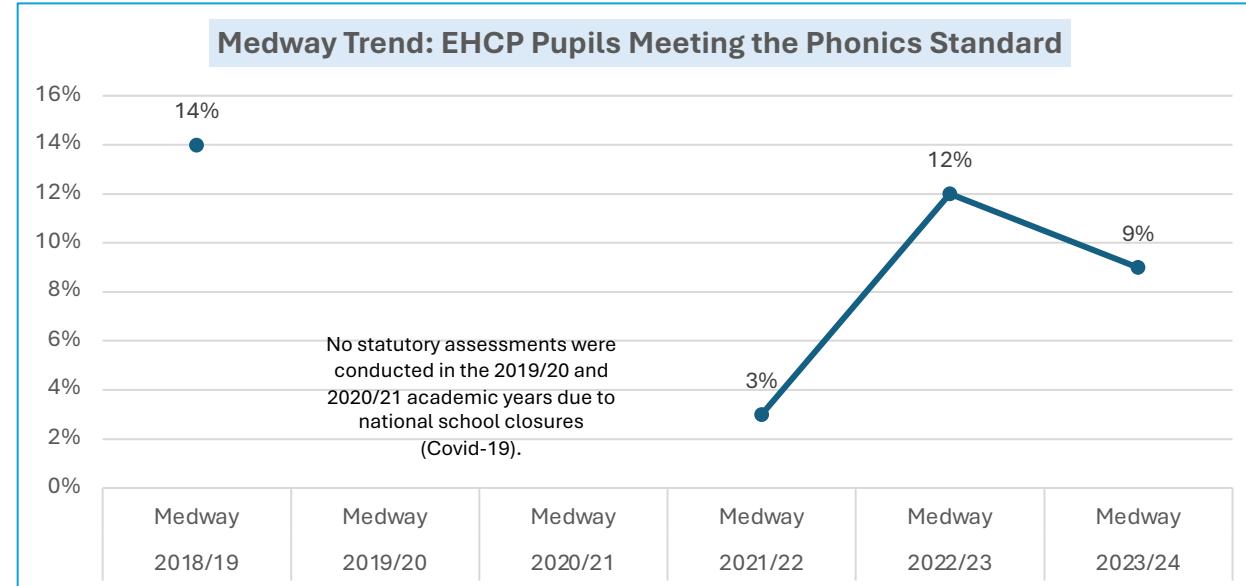
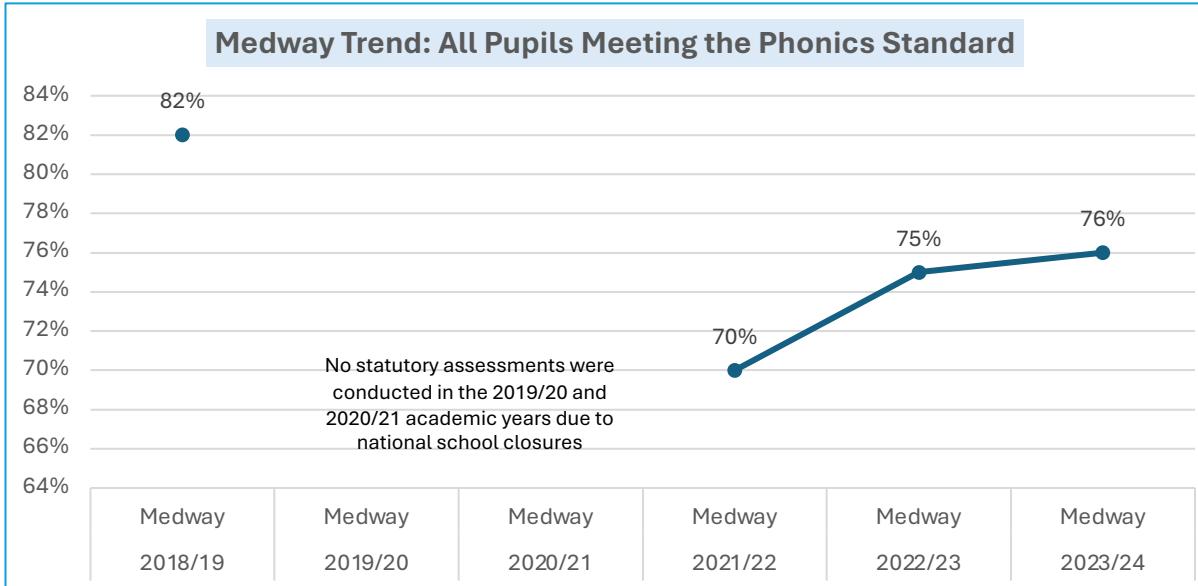
**For all pupils:** We see a story of strong system-wide resilience. Before the pandemic, **82%** met the standard. We see the expected dip here during disruptions but also a strong and steady recovery back to near pre-pandemic levels.

**For pupils with an EHCP:** The story is different. Their results have barely changed in six years, staying around **19/20%**. The pandemic didn't cause a drop, but it also didn't lead to improvement.

**Important Note:** No assessments were conducted in **2019/20** or **2020/21** due to national school closures.

**Bottom Line for Medway:** it sets a clear benchmark for us. It shows that breaking the 20% ceiling for vulnerable learners is a national challenge. Our strategic goal in Medway must be to do what the national average has not: break this trend and drive tangible improvement.

# Medway's Journey & The Local Picture



Academic Year	All Pupils - Y1 Eligible	All Pupils - Y1 Met Standards	All Pupils - % Y1 Met Standards	EHCP - Y1 Eligible	EHCP - Y1 Met Standards	EHCP - % Y1 Met Standards
2018/19	3,522	2,896	82%	73	10	14%
2021/22	3,721	2,602	70%	95	3	3%
2022/23	3,689	2,771	75%	90	11	12%
2023/24	3,719	2,817	76%	112	10	9%

**Key Trends:** Medway's story is one of resilience for all pupils, but significant volatility for its most vulnerable learners.

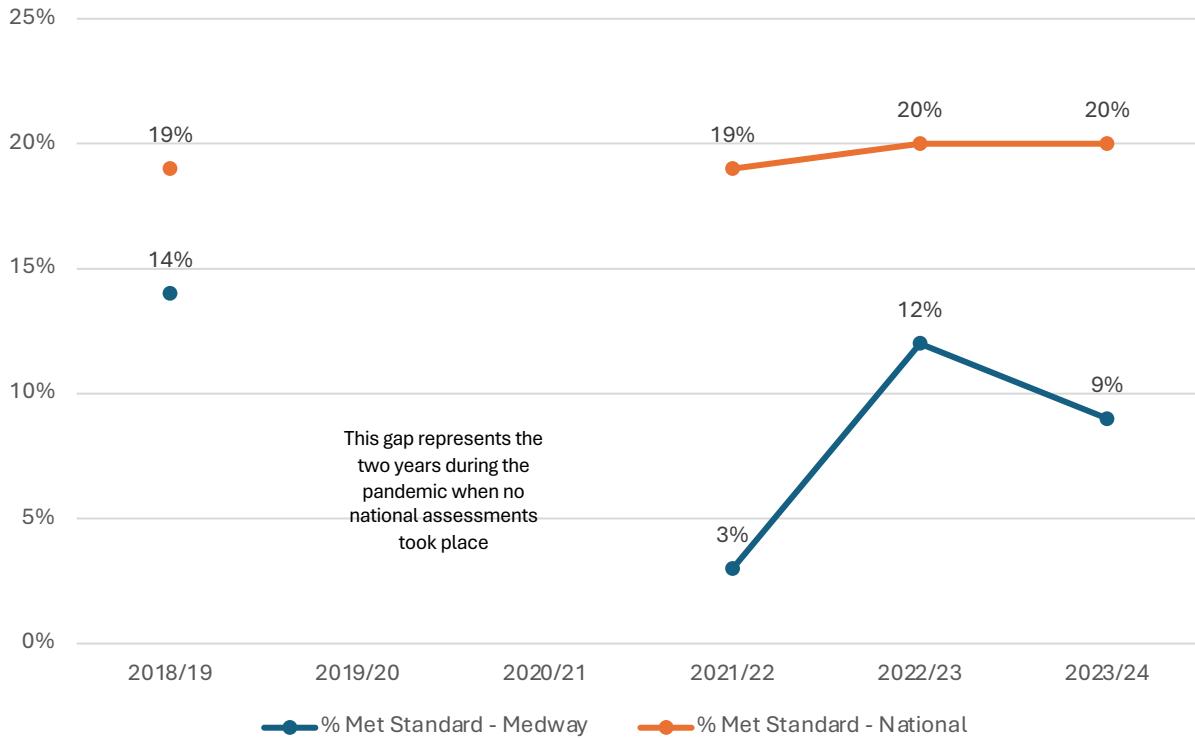
**For All Pupils:** Results show expected resilience. A pandemic-related dip to 70% in 2021/22 was followed by a steady recovery to 76% in 2023/24, mirroring the national trend.

**For EHCP Pupils:** Results have been highly volatile, ranging from 14% down to 3%, and now at 9%. This indicates a struggle to deliver consistent, effective support year-on-year.

**Our Focus:** To build on this improvement and create consistent support for every vulnerable learner.

# The Gap Analysis - Medway vs. National

National vs Medway EHCP trends



**The Gap is Significant & Persistent:** Medway's results for our vulnerable learners have been consistently and substantially below the national average for six years. In 2023/24, Medway (9%) remains far behind the National (20%) average (Less than half – for 6 years).

**A Major Data Blind Spot:** 64% of Medway's EHCP pupils were disapplicated from the test in 2023/24. This is **significantly higher** than the national average (48%) and **over 20 times higher** than the rate for all pupils in Medway (3%) which means we are not assessing the phonics skills of most of our vulnerable learners (We cannot close a gap we cannot see).

**A System Failing to Scale:** Nationally, the EHCP cohort grew **71.6%** but attainment held steady. In Medway, our cohort grew **53.4%** but attainment fell and disapplication rose.

**The Efficiency Gap:** We are supporting **53% more EHCP pupils**, yet the number meeting the phonics standard has **reduced**. This shows that increased input is not translating into better outcomes, pointing to a quality gap in interventions that must be addressed.

**This is Our Defining Challenge:** Addressing both **low attainment** and **excessive disapplication** is our most pressing priority to ensure every child is seen and supported.

**We Are Not Yet Recovering:** The decline to 3% during the pandemic shows its disproportionate effect. Our recent result of 9% indicates the gap is widening, not closing, and requires urgent intervention.

**Our Progress is Fragile:** The drop from 12% to 9% shows that our gains can be easily lost. This suggests our support system is not yet embedded or consistent enough across all schools to hold on to improvements and build on them year after year.

# Our Strategy for Improvement

Our response is a united, four-pillar strategy built on our core values.

## 1. Mandate a High-Quality Framework, Personalised for Every Child

➡️✓ Provide every school with a single, evidence-based program, plus training to adapt it for each pupil's needs.

## 2. Invest in Specialist Training and Support

❤️🤝 Equip teachers with advanced skills and create a specialist coaching team for complex needs.

## 3. Implement Termly Progress Checks

✓🚀 Identify struggles early and adjust support quickly for every pupil.

## 4. Review Disapplication and Target Resources

🤝❤️ Investigate the high disapplication rate and provide robust assessment alternatives. Direct funding to schools with the highest need.

**Goal:** To build a resilient system that ensures every child is assessed, supported, and given the best start in life.

## Conclusion & Next Steps

Our analysis reveals a significant and persistent attainment gap for Medway's EHCP pupils, compounded by a high disapplication rate that masks true need. The four-pillar strategy outlined provides a targeted, person-centred path forward.

I recommend we approve the following next steps to begin implementation:

1. Form a working group to select the single, evidence-based phonics framework for borough-wide adoption.
2. Commission specialist training for teachers and TAs on adapting this framework for complex needs, to begin next term.
3. Design and pilot the termly progress tracking system in 10 schools this academic year.
4. Conduct an audit of disapplication reasons to understand and address the root causes.

By taking these steps, we can begin to transform outcomes and ensure every child in Medway is seen, supported, and set up to succeed.

# Appendix

## 1. EHCP Pupil Disapplication Rates

Academic Year	Local Authority	All Pupils Y1 Eligible	EHCP Y1 Eligible	All Pupils Y1 Disapplied	EHCP Y1 Disapplied	All Pupils % Y1 Disapplied	EHCP % Y1 Disapplied
2018/19	Medway	3,522	73	72	44	2%	60%
2021/22	Medway	3,721	95	105	67	3%	71%
2022/23	Medway	3,689	90	102	53	3%	59%
2023/24	Medway	3,719	112	122	72	3%	64%
2018/19	National	649,490	13,552	10,985	6,192	2%	46%
2021/22	National	638,014	18,479	15,379	8,808	2%	48%
2022/23	National	632,886	20,255	15,593	9,525	2%	47%
2023/24	National	622,901	23,249	17,379	11,119	3%	48%

## 2. Key Term Definitions

**Y1 (Year 1):** The school year when children are 5 to 6 years old. This is the year the phonics screening check is first administered.

**% Met Standard:** The percentage of pupils who met the expected standard in the Phonics Screening Check.

**EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan):** A legal document that describes a child's special educational needs and the support they require.

**Disapplied:** When a pupil is officially exempted from taking the test because it is deemed not appropriate for their ability level.

**Cohort:** A group of pupils being studied together (e.g., all Year 1 pupils in Medway).

**National (Data):** The average performance for all pupils in England. This is the benchmark we compare Medway against.

**Phonics Screening Check:** A statutory assessment taken by all Year 1 pupils in England to confirm they have learned phonic decoding to an appropriate standard.

**Thank You**