Definition of the target groups

There is no definition of the term "special need" in Swedish education, the focus is rather on every pupil's right to reach the educational objectives based on their ability. There are many reasons why a pupil is in need of support. Many pupils encounter difficulties at some point during their education and need support measures for a limited period. Other students need support throughout their education due to illness, social conditions, disabilities or other reasons.

Since 2015 the Education act defines a "newly arrived" pupil (nyanländ) as someone who has been living abroad, is now residing in the country, and started their education here later than the autumn term of the calendar year he or she turns seven. When assessing the needs of a pupil the school shall first consider whether the individual needs can be ascribed to and supported based on the status as newly arrived. A pupil shall no longer be considered newly arrived after four years of education in Sweden.

If a pupil is at risk not to reach the educational requirements the principal must be notified. The headteacher shall promptly investigate if special assistance is needed. The school is responsibility for providing support measures as long as the pupil is at risk of failing to pass the relevant level for his/her age without the special aid. Some pupils may be entitled to special assistance even though they meet the requirements for higher grades provided that they would be at risk of not achieving the lowest proficiency without the support measures.

Specific support measures

Support measures in the preschool

Children in preschool (förskola) that need support in their development, due to physical, mental or other reasons, shall be given the support that their special needs require. This is determined in chapter 8 of the Education Act. This means that children should be given special support in the manner and to the extent necessary for each child to have the opportunity to develop and learn according to the curriculum. The child's legal guardian shall be given opportunity to participate in the formulation of the specific support measures. The preschool shall contribute to the language development of each child, including mother tongues other than Swedish. The preschool head (förskolechef) is responsible for the needs of the children and any support measures they might need. The needs of each child shall, as far as possible, be fulfilled within mainstream education as the preschool group itself is vital in the learning process.

For children who do not attend preschool many municipalities run ‘open preschools’ (öppen förskola), that children and their parents can attend for a few hours a day. For many families with a foreign background these function as a meeting place and provide a first step into Swedish social life. Some
municipal authorities also run so called ‘special language preschool groups’ (språkförskolor) that children with a mother tongue other than Swedish can attend for two to three hours a day in order to learn Swedish. Both of these provisions are free of charge.

**Support measures in school education**

Pupils in school have the right to support to fulfill the educational targets based on their individual needs. There are many different types of support measures available, including:

- language support;
- special adaptations to the curriculum and/or special teaching methods and materials;
- additional or specialist teachers (e.g. specialists in reading/mathematics, speech therapists, educational psychologists);
- special arrangements for assessment/evaluation or progress through education;
- lower child/staff ratio;
- liaison with parents as well as other local stakeholders (e.g. from social, health or labour market sectors);
- access to individual transportation solutions;
- alterations to school building facilities.

The needs of each pupil shall, as far as possible, be fulfilled within mainstream education. The headteacher is responsible for the needs of the pupils and any support measures they might require.

**Newly arrived pupils**

Most municipalities offer newly arrived pupils the choice of a reception class. These classes usually include asylum-seeking pupils and pupils who have been granted a residence permit. The pupils receive tuition in the Swedish language, learn about Swedish society and are taught school subjects at a level based on previous knowledge. The time spent in the reception class varies, depending on the individual pupil's level of education and how quickly he or she acquires a good enough command of Swedish to follow lessons in a regular class.

Newly arrived pupils who have moved into a regular class are taught with the same national subject syllabuses as other pupils. Generally speaking, newly arrived pupils are placed in classes with pupils of the same age. Newly arrived pupils who need additional support to be able to follow the lessons are entitled to what is called ‘study guidance’. This extra help, which is given by a support teacher, may be provided either in Swedish or in the pupil's mother tongue. The support teacher often brings together a small group of pupils for special lessons but may also assist individual pupils during their regular classes.

**Swedish tuition and mother tongue tuition**

All students whose mother tongue is any other than Swedish can study Swedish as a second language throughout their time at compulsory and upper secondary school. The subject ‘Swedish as a Second Language’ has its own syllabus and is deemed equivalent to the subject ‘Swedish’ for example when applying to tertiary education.

Pupils can be offered tuition in some subjects in their mother tongue (modersmålundervisning). This is most common in schools with a high proportion of immigrant pupils and in grant-aided independent schools with a language profile, where the language of tuition is another than Swedish. If possible, the pupils in reception classes are also given tuition in their mother tongue. All pupils in the compulsory and upper secondary school whose parents have a mother tongue other than Swedish,
and where this language is used as the means of daily communication can receive instruction in the
mother tongue providing the pupil has good knowledge of the language. Municipalities, however, are
not obliged to arrange mother tongue tuition if there are no suitable teachers available, or if there are
less than five pupils in the municipality wishing to have such instruction. The exceptions from this are
the recognised national minority languages in Sweden. Pupils with a national minority language as
their mother tongue have the right to mother tongue tuition, even if the number of pupils in the
municipality is less than five, and even if the language is not used as the main means of daily
communication in the family. There are five official minority languages: Sami and Tornedal Finnish
(autochthonous languages) and Finnish, Romany and Yiddish (non-territorial languages).