



Every Child Succeeds: Special Education for Special Children in Basel, Switzerland



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Special education is a field dedicated to supporting and educating individuals with various disabilities. These individuals may include children from birth, school-aged children, or adolescents and young adults who are still in education. Its focus is on ensuring needs-based, individualized education for people with special educational needs or disabilities. The primary goals of special education are the optimal development of personality, the promotion of autonomy, and the facilitation of social integration and participation. Special education is an individualized instructional approach designed for individuals with special needs (e.g., intellectual, auditory, physical, visual impairments; autism; learning difficulties). A child or young person is considered to have a special educational need when it is determined that their development is significantly limited or at risk, or when they are unable to meet regular academic standards without additional support. Moreover, special education applies to children and adolescents who demonstrate substantial challenges in social competence, as well as in cognitive and performance-related abilities. In Switzerland, the responsibility for the education of children and young people with special educational needs lies with the individual cantons. On behalf of the EDK, the Foundation Swiss Center for Healing and Special Education supports the cantons in the implementation of their cantonal special education frameworks. The cantons are responsible for the education of children and young people with special educational needs. The design of special education services and measures is determined by each canton in accordance with its respective special education framework. In Basel, the Special Education and Hospital School Ordinance is the ordinance governing the education and support of students with special educational needs and hospital schooling. This ordinance regulates the provision of education and support for students with special educational needs during compulsory and post-compulsory schooling, up to a maximum age of 20, as well as for students with or without special educational needs in hospital schools. Various services are available both within and outside the school setting, depending on the child's needs in Basel-Stadt. Detailed information and links regarding these services can be found at <https://www.bs.ch/ed/volksschulen/foerderung/verstaerkte-massnahmen>.

Keywords: special education, special children, child's needs, special educational needs, child success, Switzerland, Basel, learning

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Dear Readers,

Special education is a field dedicated to supporting and educating individuals with various disabilities. These individuals may include children from birth, school-aged children, or adolescents and young adults who are still in education. Special education operates at the intersection of educational science, medicine, and psychology. Its focus is on ensuring needs-based, individualized education for people with special educational needs or disabilities. The primary goals of special education are the optimal development of personality, the promotion of autonomy, and the facilitation of social integration and participation (Berufsberatung, 2025).

Special education is an individualized instructional approach designed for individuals with special needs (e.g., intellectual, auditory, physical, visual impairments; autism; learning difficulties). A child or young person is considered to have a special educational need when it is determined that their development is significantly limited or at risk, or when they are unable to meet regular academic standards without additional support. Moreover, special education applies to children and adolescents who demonstrate substantial challenges in social competence, as well as in cognitive and performance-related abilities. In Switzerland, the responsibility for the education of children and young people with special educational needs lies with the individual cantons. The following types of special education services are provided within the cantonal systems (EDK, 2025a; Basel Erziehungsdepartement, 2025a):

Special Education

Special education teachers receive specialized training and work in schools to support students with learning difficulties or disabilities. They also provide assistance to children with particular social and emotional needs, who are technically referred to as “children with special educational needs.” Special education teachers are part of the teaching team that leads the classroom. They are primarily responsible for assessing and addressing the individual needs of students with special educational requirements. They assess students’ learning levels and plan individualized support programs.

Early Childhood Special Needs Education

Early childhood special needs education addresses the needs of children with disabilities or those whose development is delayed, impaired, or at risk. Supportive measures can be implemented within the family context from the child’s birth until up to two years after entry into school.

Introductory Classes

For children with developmental delays transitioning from kindergarten to the first grade of primary school, schools can establish so-called introductory classes. These specialized classes replace the first year of primary school and span two years. Children who attend such an introductory class therefore receive an additional year in primary education.

Integrative Schooling

In integrative schooling, children or adolescents with special educational needs are integrated into a class at a regular school, either on a full-time or part-time basis, by using the special education measures offered by the school and/or through enhanced measures arranged according to a standardized evaluation procedure (integrative special needs schooling).

Special Needs Classes

In special needs classes, only a limited number of pupils are admitted—those whose development is at risk, or who, due to their difficulties (e.g., behavioural or learning difficulties), are likely to be unable to follow lessons in a regular school setting. Special needs classes represent a form of education that lies between mainstream and special needs schooling.

Special Needs School

A special needs school forms part of compulsory education and specializes in specific types of disabilities, learning difficulties, or behavioural challenges. Special needs schools only admit children and adolescents who require enhanced measures, as determined by a standardized evaluation procedure. They may also be combined with residential accommodation or integrated with school-based day-care services.

Educational Therapeutic Services such as Speech Therapy and Psychomotor Therapy***Speech Therapy***

Language disorders, speech disorders, voice disorders, and communication disorders are diagnosed and treated in speech therapy. Abnormalities in language development can manifest in various forms. Children may have difficulties expressing themselves correctly—both orally and in writing. Difficulties may also arise with swallowing, voice, reading, writing, or numeracy skills. Speech therapists support children who experience such difficulties. This support enhances children's linguistic communication abilities.

Psychomotor Therapy

Psychomotor skills pertain to movement. Psychomotor therapy addresses the interaction between perception, emotion, cognition, movement, and behaviour, as well as their

physical expression. In this context, the therapist supports children in a holistic manner and builds upon their existing strengths.

On behalf of the EDK, the [Foundation Swiss Center for Healing and Special Education \(SZH\)](#) supports the cantons in the implementation of their cantonal special education frameworks. The cantons are responsible for the education of children and young people with special educational needs. The design of special education services and measures is determined by each canton in accordance with its respective [special education framework](#) (EDK, 2025b). The SZH informs, advises, and connects the Confederation, cantons, institutions, and other interested parties regarding the challenges of curative and special education, and develops innovative solutions and products in the field of inclusive education. The SZH prepares and disseminates information to authorities, professionals, associations, and other stakeholders (SZH, 2025).

Under the Topics of Curative and Special Education, information is available concerning the [integration](#) and [special education services](#) provided to children and adolescents with special educational needs in early childhood education, compulsory schooling, and extracurricular education ([social pedagogy](#)). [Vocational education and training](#) opportunities for young people with special educational needs are also presented (SZH, 2025).

In Basel, the Special Education and Hospital School Ordinance (SPSSV) is the ordinance governing the education and support of students with special educational needs and hospital schooling. This ordinance regulates the provision of education and support for students with special educational needs during compulsory and post-compulsory schooling, up to a maximum age of 20, as well as for students with or without special educational needs in hospital schools (SPSSV, 2025).

Some students require more extensive assistance. The support services available for these children are often insufficient. They therefore receive more intensive, individualized support. Various services are available both within and outside the school setting, depending on the child's needs in Basel-Stadt (Basel Erziehungsdepartement, 2025b). Detailed information and links regarding these services can be found at <https://www.bs.ch/ed/volksschulen/foerderung/verstaerkte-massnahmen>.

Sincerely,

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