

This qualification specification covers the following qualification:

Qualification Number	Qualification Title
603/3434/4	Gateway Qualifications Level 3 Certificate for Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings

Version and date	Change detail	Section/Page Reference
1.0 (Jan 2020)	n/a	n/a
1.1 (June 2020)	Front, back covers and RPL statement updated.	n/a
1.2 (April 2021)	Qualification approval from Qualifications Wales removed.	Pg7 and 8
1.3 (March 2022)	Various updates.	n/a
1.4 (Nov 2022)	Changed back cover and removed address	Page 16

About this qualification specification

This qualification specification is intended for tutors, assessors, internal quality assurers, centre quality managers and other staff within Gateway Qualifications recognised centres and/or prospective centres.

It sets out what is required of the learner in order to achieve the qualification. It also contains information specific to managing and delivering the qualification(s) including specific quality assurance requirements.

The specification should be read in conjunction with the Gateway Qualifications Centre Handbook and other publications available on the website which contain more detailed guidance on assessment and verification practice.

In order to offer this qualification you must be a Gateway Qualifications recognised centre.

If your centre is not yet recognised, please contact our Development Team to discuss becoming a Gateway Qualifications Recognised Centre:

Telephone: 01206 911211

Email: enquiries@gatewayqualifications.org.uk

Website: www.gatewayqualifications.org.uk/advice-guidance/delivering-our-qualifications/become-recognised-centre/

Contents

About this qualification specification.....	4
1. Qualification Information	7
1.1. About the qualification/s.....	7
1.2. Purpose	7
1.3. Key facts	8
1.4. Achievement methodology	8
1.5. Geographical coverage.....	8
1.6. Progression opportunities	8
1.7. Funding.....	10
1.8. Equality, diversity and inclusion.....	10
2. Learner Entry Requirements.....	11
2.1. Age	11
2.2. Prior qualifications	11
2.3. Prior skills/knowledge/understanding	11
2.4. Restrictions	11
2.5. Access to qualifications for learners with disabilities or specific needs	11
2.6. Additional requirements/guidance	12
2.7. Recruiting learners with integrity.....	12
3. Achieving the Qualification.....	13
3.1. Qualification structure	13
Gateway Qualifications Level 3 Certificate for Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings.....	13
3.2. Achievement methodology	13
3.3. Recognition of prior learning.....	13
3.4. Links to other qualifications	14
4. Assessment and Quality Assurance	15
4.1. Method of assessment.....	15
4.2. Assessment language	15
4.3. Assessment materials.....	15
4.4. Assessment guidance.....	15
4.5. Qualification-specific centre requirements.....	15
4.6. Qualification-specific tutor/assessor requirements	15
4.7. Qualification-specific quality assurance requirements	16
4.8. Additional requirements/guidance	16
5. What to do next.....	17

- 6. Gateway Qualifications 17
- 7. Appendices 18
 - 7.1. Appendix 1 – Unit Details 18
 - Early Years Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOS) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Settings 18
 - Indicative Content: Early Years Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOS) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Settings 20
 - 7.2. Appendix 2 - The Role of the Early Years SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) 23
 - Appendix 3 - Level 3 Early Years SENCO Qualification Specification. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

1. Qualification Information

1.1. About the qualification/s

The qualification has been approved by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) that regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England.

The Children and Families Act 2014 states that all Early Years settings including those in the private voluntary independent (PVI) sector must have a Special Educational Need Coordinator (SENCO). The role and remit of the Early Years SENCO is outlined in chapter 5 of the SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015)

The Eastern Partnership UK (SEND) hosted by Herts for Learning Ltd, has been part of a DfE working group which met over a series of months to define both the job role and a qualification specification for the Early Years SENCO in the PVI sector. This was published by the DfE in March 2018.

Additional guidance for delivery/updated links have been provided within this specification in line with revisions to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) criteria published January 2022. This is to ensure that our qualification continues to reflect current thinking

The DfE qualification specification [DfE external document template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills needed in order to perform the Early Years SENCO role effectively in the PVI sector.

1.2. Purpose

The overall purpose of this qualification is to ensure that SENCOs in the Early Years (PVI) including childminders have a high level of knowledge and skill and can demonstrate confident and appropriate practice in relation to their duties, as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice.

All early years providers in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors that are funded by the local authority must have regard to the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice \(2015\)](#) which provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations and applies to England. It relates to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabled children and young people. This qualification refers to information provided in The Role of the Early Years SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) document, which is available from the qualification webpage on [DfE external document template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

1.3. Key facts

Qualification Title	Total Qualification Time	Guided Learning	Credit Value
Gateway Qualifications Level 3 Certificate for Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings	130	30	13

Total Qualification Time is the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could be reasonably expected to be required for a Learner to achieve and demonstrate the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of the qualification.

Total Qualification Time is comprised of the following two elements:

- the number of hours which an awarding organisation has assigned to a qualification for Guided Learning, and
- an estimate of the number of hours a Learner will reasonably be likely to spend in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place by – but, unlike Guided Learning, not under the Immediate Guidance or Supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

1.4. Achievement methodology

The qualification will be awarded to learners who successfully achieve the single mandatory unit, as evidenced through a Portfolio of Evidence that has been successfully verified and monitored through Gateway Qualifications' Quality Assurance process. Achievement is therefore determined by successful completion of unit assessment with no further requirement for additional/summative assessment.

1.5. Geographical coverage

This qualification has been approved by Ofqual to be offered in England.

If a centre based outside England (including Scotland) would like to offer this qualification, they should make an enquiry to Gateway Qualifications.

1.6. Progression opportunities

--

This qualification supports those who are acting as SENCOs or who aspire to do so within a setting or childminder context. Successful candidates may wish to further develop their understanding of particular types of SEN through awards which focus on particular types of need such as autistic spectrum disorder.

1.7. Funding

The qualification is based on a specification produced by the DfE and is consistent with the statutory requirements for Early Years SENCOs outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015), however, there is currently no public funding available for this qualification.

1.8. Equality, diversity and inclusion

It is Gateway Qualifications' aim that there shall be equal opportunities within this organisation and in all the services it provides and within its recognised centres and via the services they provide and so meet the organisation's legal responsibilities to prevent discrimination.

In particular it is the organisation's intention that there should be no discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic including age, disability, gender assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation. It is acknowledged that this is not an exhaustive list.

2. Learner Entry Requirements

2.1. Age

The approved age range for these qualifications is: 19+

2.2. Prior qualifications

There is no requirement for learners to have achieved prior qualifications or units prior to taking this qualification.

2.3. Prior skills/knowledge/understanding

There is no requirement for learners to have prior skills, knowledge or understanding.

2.4. Restrictions

There are no restrictions to entry.

2.5. Access to qualifications for learners with disabilities or specific needs

Gateway Qualifications and recognised centres have a responsibility to ensure that the process of assessment is robust and fair and allows the learner to show what they know and can do without compromising the assessment criteria.

Gateway Qualification has a duty to permit a reasonable adjustment where an assessment arrangement would put a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled.

The following adaptations are examples of what may be considered for the purposes of facilitating access, as long as they do not impact on any competence standards being tested:

- adapting assessment materials;
- adaptation of the physical environment for access purposes;
- adaptation to equipment;
- assessment material in an enlarged format or Braille;
- assessment material on coloured paper or in audio format;
- British Sign Language (BSL);
- changing or adapting the assessment method;
- changing usual assessment arrangements;
- extra time, e.g. assignment extensions;

- language modified assessment material;
- practical assistant;
- prompter;
- providing assistance during assessment;
- reader;
- scribe;
- transcript;
- use of assistive software;
- using assistive technology;
- use of CCTV, coloured overlays, low vision aids;
- use of a different assessment location;
- use of ICT/responses using electronic devices.

It is important to note that not all of the adjustments (as above) will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. The learner may not need, nor be allowed the same adjustment for all assessments.

Learners should be fully involved in any decisions about adjustments/adaptations. This will ensure that individual needs can be met, whilst still bearing in mind the specified assessment criteria for a particular qualification.

A reasonable adjustment for a particular learner may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available access arrangements specified above.

Special Considerations

Requests for special consideration should be submitted as soon as possible. Please refer to the [Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy](#).

2.6. Additional requirements/guidance

There are no additional rules or guidance regarding learner entry requirements.

2.7. Recruiting learners with integrity

It is vital that centres recruit with integrity with regard to qualifications. Centres must ensure that learners have the correct information and advice on their selected qualification(s) and that the qualification(s) will meet their needs.

The recruitment process must include the centre assessing each potential learner and making justifiable and professional judgements about the learner's potential to successfully complete the assessment and achieve the qualification. Such an assessment must identify, where appropriate, the support that will be made available to the learner to facilitate access to the qualification(s).

3. Achieving the Qualification

3.1. Qualification structure

The knowledge, skills and understanding that will be assessed as part of the qualification are set out within the unit specifications. These include the learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria. For information on Recognition of Prior Learning/Exempt and Equivalent units please see section **3.3 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**.

Gateway Qualifications Level 3 Certificate for Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings

Learners must achieve the single mandatory unit.

Unit Number	Unit Title	Level	Guided Learning	Credit Value
Y/617/1446	Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings	3	30	13

3.2. Achievement methodology

The qualification will be awarded to learners who successfully achieve the single mandatory unit, as evidenced in a Portfolio of Evidence that has been successfully verified and monitored through Gateway Qualifications' Quality Assurance process. Achievement is therefore determined by successful completion of unit assessment with no further requirement for additional/summative assessment.

3.3. Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) provides learners and Centres with an alternative assessment method by which a learner's previous achievements can meet the assessment requirements for a unit/qualification through the knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and so, do not need to develop these through a course of learning.

It enables the recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable to contribute to a unit, units or a whole qualification according to the RPL criteria for a given qualification.

The process of Recognition for Prior Learning is not applicable to this qualification.

3.4. Links to other qualifications

In March 2017, the Government published an [Early Years Workforce Strategy](#) as part of its commitment to enhance the quality of knowledge and skills of the Early Years Workforce. As part of this work, a [specification](#) for a level 2 qualification for Early Years practitioners was developed by the DfE. It includes a unit focusing on Special Educational Needs. The level 2 qualification provides a broad basis for progression to this more specialised level 3 SEN-specific qualification.

4. Assessment and Quality Assurance

The following are in addition to the standard assessment and quality assurance requirements set out in the Gateway Qualifications Centre Handbook.

4.1. Method of assessment

The method of assessment for the qualification is through a portfolio of evidence.

4.2. Assessment language

This qualification is assessed in English only.

4.3. Assessment materials

Centres are responsible for developing their own assessment material in the form of tasks which will enable learners to demonstrate that they are able to meet the necessary assessment criteria.

4.4. Assessment guidance

There is no additional assessment guidance for this qualification.

4.5. Qualification-specific centre requirements

Centres must ensure that they have the appropriate resources in place when delivering performance units from vocational areas.

4.6. Qualification-specific tutor/assessor requirements

Tutors must be fully qualified and experienced educational practitioners knowledgeable about both SEND and Early Years practice in either maintained and/or the PVI sector.

4.7. Qualification-specific quality assurance requirements

The internal quality assurance process must include active participation from educational practitioners who are knowledgeable about SEND practice, familiar with the expectations of the Early Years SENCO outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE 2015 chapter 5) and able to recognise good Early Years practice in the PVI sector.

4.8. Additional requirements/guidance

There are no additional requirements that learners must satisfy in order for assessment to be undertaken and the qualification to be awarded.

5. What to do next

For existing centres please contact your named Development Manager or Development Officer.

Tel: 01206 911211

Email: enquiries@gatewayqualifications.org.uk

6. Gateway Qualifications

Gateway Qualifications, a not for profit registered charity, is an Awarding Organisation based in Colchester.

We work with learning providers and industry experts to design and develop qualifications that benefit the learner and the employer.

We support flexible, responsive and quality assured learning opportunities whether it's in the classroom, at work, in the community or through distance learning.

We are recognised by Ofqual, to design, develop and submit qualifications to the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF).

7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1 – Unit Details

Early Years Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOS) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Settings

Level:	3
Credit Value:	13
GLH:	30
Unit Number:	Y/617/1446

This unit has 4 learning outcomes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA - PASS
The learner will:	The learner can:
1 Understand Special Educational Needs (SEN).	1.1 Explain the four broad areas of special educational need, giving examples of the difficulties associated with each. 1.2 Explain how different types of high and low incidence SEN are identified, including in children with English as an Additional Language (EAL). 1.3 Explain the legal obligations of early years providers towards disabled children. 1.4 Explain how to use the graduated approach in assessing, planning for, meeting and reviewing the needs of children with SEN, ensuring that all key stakeholders are involved. 1.5 Explain the different elements and their importance within an effective support plan. 1.6 Illustrate how the learning of children with different types of SEN can be supported through different adjustments and interventions. 1.7 Summarise effective practice in information-sharing in relation to SEN both within the setting and beyond.

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA - PASS
The learner will:	The learner can:
<p>2 Understand the role of the Early Years SENCO in a PVI early years setting.</p>	<p>2.1 Explain the role of the SENCO in a PVI early years setting.</p> <p>2.2 Summarise the importance of understanding the SEND CoP and of EHC Plans in meeting own responsibilities as a SENCO.</p> <p>2.3 Assess own skills, knowledge and competencies for the role, identifying gaps and ways to address these.</p> <p>2.4 Demonstrate the ability to be a reflective practitioner.</p>
<p>3 Understand how to support colleagues in their work with children with SEN.</p>	<p>3.1 Explain how key information will be shared with colleagues so that they are aware of their responsibilities and understand the setting's approach to SEN and relevant policies and procedures.</p> <p>3.2 Explain how to assess the skills and competences of staff in relation to their responsibilities towards meeting the needs of children with SEN.</p> <p>3.3 Explain ways to meet staff development needs through training and support.</p>
<p>4 Understand the importance of liaising with professionals and agencies beyond own setting.</p>	<p>4.1 Explain the contribution of own setting within the context of the local offer for early years.</p> <p>4.2 Explain the range of support on offer to children with SEN aged 0 – 5 and their families within own local area.</p> <p>4.3 Explain reasons why an early years SENCO might need to liaise with professionals or agencies, including the local authority.</p>

Indicative Content: Early Years Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Settings
Coverage of Department for Education qualification specification:
Learning Outcome 1:

1a.	Explain what Special Educational Needs (SEN) are.
1b.	Describe the four areas of need and give examples of the difficulties associated with each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and interaction • Cognition and learning • Social, emotional and mental health difficulties • Sensory and/or physical needs.
1c.	Describe the characteristics of the different types of high and low incidence special needs you are likely to see in your setting and how these are identified.
1d.	Be able to explain how any differences in a child's rate of progress are related solely to learning English as an additional language (EAL) and not SEN.
1e.	Be able to explain how to identify when SEN is occurring in children with EAL.
1f.	Explain the legal obligations that early years providers have towards disabled children.
1g.	Explain what the Graduated Approach is and how each aspect helps to provide suitable SEN support, within the cycle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess • Plan • Do • Review
1h.	Explain how to actively engage the child and the child's parents/carers in the assess, plan, do, review process.
1i.	Explain the importance of the child and the child's parents/carers, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions
1j.	Explain the role of the early years practitioner/key worker and that of the SENCO within the cycle.
1k.	Explain how and why reviews of progress, including formal progress checks, should be used to inform the Graduated Approach, including who will do what/why/where/when.
1l.	Explain what an effective support plan should include and why clear outcomes are important.
1m.	Give examples of adjustment strategies and interventions for supporting the learning of children with different types of SEN to ensure positive learning outcomes.
1n.	Explain what information can and/or should be shared with others within the setting and beyond to support the achievement of the agreed outcomes and effective transition.
4h.	Explain how to share information with the receiving setting or school and how to involve children and their parents/carers in this.

Learning Outcome 2:

2b.	Explain the role of the SENCO in private, voluntary and independent early years settings, including for:
-----	--

Indicative Content: Early Years Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Settings	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring all early years practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEN • advising and supporting colleagues • ensuring parents/carers are closely involved throughout and that their insights inform action taken by the setting, and • liaising with professionals or agencies beyond the setting. • Gaining the views of the child.
3a.	Explain own responsibility to support colleagues in their work with children with SEN.
4f.	Understand how funding can contribute to whole setting support to improve children's SEN and disability outcomes.
2g.	Explain what and how records should be maintained and used to track progress and achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes for children.
2a.	Understand the principles, statutory guidance and legislation underpinning the 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice'.
2f.	Understand the principles underpinning Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans.
2c.	Assess own skills and competencies, identify any gaps and next steps in professional development.
2d.	Reflect on own practice
2e.	Identify and use professional development opportunities, including training and other sources of support, to address own development needs.
Learning Outcome 3:	
3a.	Explain own responsibility to support colleagues in their work with children with SEN.
3b.	Understand how you would identify and support practitioners to develop their expertise in relation to SEN to ensure practitioners have the relevant skills and knowledge, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • induction of new staff • their responsibilities to children with SEN • the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEN • how the setting works in partnership with parents/carers to identify a child as having SEN, • how the practitioner and the SENCO agree, in consultation with the child and the child's parents/carers, the outcomes they are seeking for the child • assessing their skills, competencies, and next steps in professional development in relation to particular impairments. • Identifying and using training and other sources of support available locally help them in explaining the duties to colleagues.
2g.	Explain what and how records should be maintained and used to track progress and achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes for children.
2f.	Understand the principles underpinning Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans.
Learning Outcome 4:	
4a.	Understand the local offer, including the provision that the Local Authority expects to be available from providers of all relevant early years education.
4b.	Liaise with professionals, agencies and services beyond the setting, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEN support or learning support services including 'local offer' • sensory support services or specialist teachers

Indicative Content: Early Years Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOS) in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Settings

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • therapies such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy • support available to parents/carers to aid their child's development at home, including such services as Portage • Independent Advice and Support Services (IASS) • Local voluntary agencies who provide support to children and their families • Childminder Agencies/Networks • Social Care Services • Area SENCO, inclusion officer, or equivalent where available.
4c.	<p>Understand the support available including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health and social care services for disabled children and children with SEN • Services assisting providers to support young children with medical conditions • Childcare for disabled children and children with SEN • Services providing parents/carers and children with information, advice and support on SEN and disability • Groups who can support children and their parents/carers
4d.	<p>Explain how to signpost families for advice and services beyond the setting and encourage use of them.</p>
4e.	<p>Link with the local authority to liaise over individual children and links on wider strategic issues such as securing sufficient expertise and experience on SEN and disability locally.</p>

7.2. Appendix 2 - The Role of the Early Years SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator)

Purpose

This document is intended as guidance for early years providers and practitioners to help clarify the role of the Early Years SENCO in non-maintained early years settings. It should be read alongside the [Special educational needs and disability code of practice](#).

Introduction

All children are entitled to an education that enables them to:

- achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, and
- become confident young children with a growing ability to communicate their own views and ready to make the transition into compulsory education

All early years providers are required to have arrangements in place to identify and support children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) or disabilities and to promote equality of opportunity for children in their care. These requirements are set out in the [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

A child who is under compulsory school age has a special educational need if they are likely to have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision when they reach compulsory school age or they would do, if special educational provision were not made for them.

All early years providers in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors that are funded by the local authority must have regard to the SEND code of practice: [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK](#)

which provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations and applies to England. It relates to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabled children and young people.

Childminders are encouraged to identify a person to act as SENCO. Childminders who are registered with a childminder agency or who are part of a network may wish to share that role between them.

The Early Years SENCO role is for a Level 3 practitioner in a private, voluntary and independent setting. It is also relevant to childminders. This is an important role to ensure the best possible educational outcomes are achieved for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The Early Years SENCO role involves:

- ensuring all practitioners in the setting understand their responsibilities to children with SEN and the setting's approach to identifying and meeting SEN
- advising and supporting colleagues
- ensuring parents are closely involved throughout and that their insights inform action taken by the setting, and
- liaising with professionals or agencies beyond the setting

A recent revision of the criteria for the role of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) in the early years has been published in January 2022.

These changes indicate minor changes in the teaching and delivery of the Gateway Qualifications Early Years SENCO in PVI Settings Level 3 Certificate. The changes do not impact the assessment of the qualification but aim to ensure that our qualification continues to reflect current thinking. We have included additional guidance and indicative content which must be included within delivery within this specification.

These changes are identified in the indicative content for the unit and will be found in later published versions of this qualification on our website. Please be assured that the changes identified will allow teaching and delivery to meet the revised criteria from the DfE for practitioners in early years settings working in, or preparing to work in, the role of the SENCo. All delivery must refer to the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) code of practice:

[SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK](#)

All delivery must refer to information provided in the role of the early years SENCo document, which can be found here:

[DfE external document template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

