

# Chapter 1

## Prevalence of pupils with special educational needs

This chapter contains information on the numbers of pupils with special educational needs. It provides a breakdown according to gender, age and ethnic group, for each of the primary types of need. It also looks at changes in special educational need provision over time.

### Key findings on the prevalence of special educational needs

In England, the number of pupils with special educational needs increased between 2005 and 2009 to reach 1,656,000. Although the number of pupils with statements decreased, the numbers without statements (those at School Action and School Action Plus) increased by more.

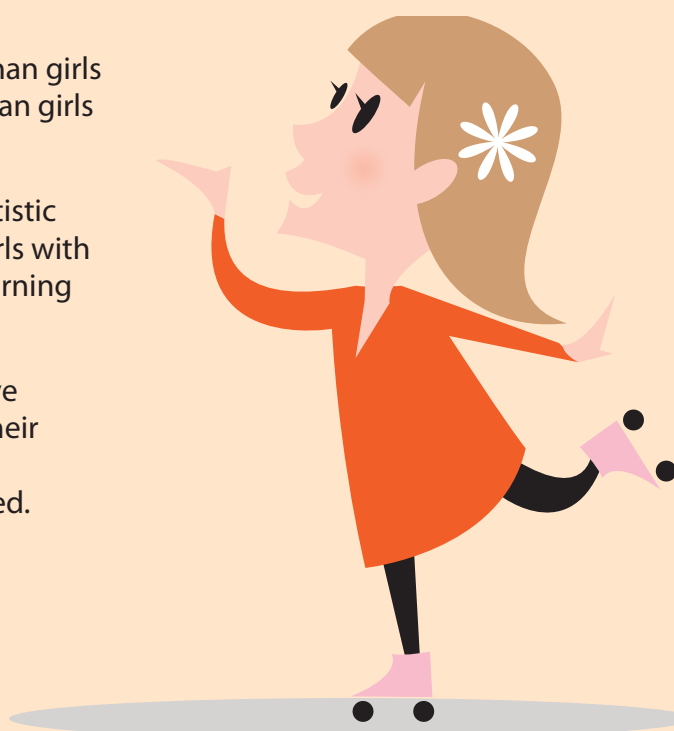
Of pupils with statements, the most common type of primary need was moderate learning difficulties and the least common was multi-sensory impairment.

#### Gender

Boys were over two and a half times more likely than girls to have statements. There were also more boys than girls at School Action Plus.

Boys with statements were most likely to have autistic spectrum disorder as their primary need, while girls with statements were most likely to have moderate learning difficulties as their primary need.

Boys at School Action Plus were most likely to have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties as their primary need, while girls were most likely to have moderate learning difficulties as their primary need.



### Ethnicity

At primary schools, black pupils were the most likely to have special educational needs. At secondary schools, white, mixed race and black pupils were the most likely to have statements. At secondary schools black pupils were most likely to have special educational needs, without statements. Chinese pupils were least likely to have special educational needs at both primary and secondary schools.

### Free school meal eligibility

Pupils with special educational needs were much more likely to be eligible for free school meals than those without special educational needs. The most common type of primary need for those eligible for free school meals was moderate learning difficulties.



See Data Annex 1 for further detail on the material covered in this chapter. All referenced tables can be found in the accompanying downloadable spreadsheets at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000851/index.shtml>. All numbers which appear in this section of the chapter were taken from the School Census (see Data Annex 1 for further details). Unless stated, numbers and special educational need provision were based on the position in the January of the year in question.

### Percentage of pupils with special educational needs

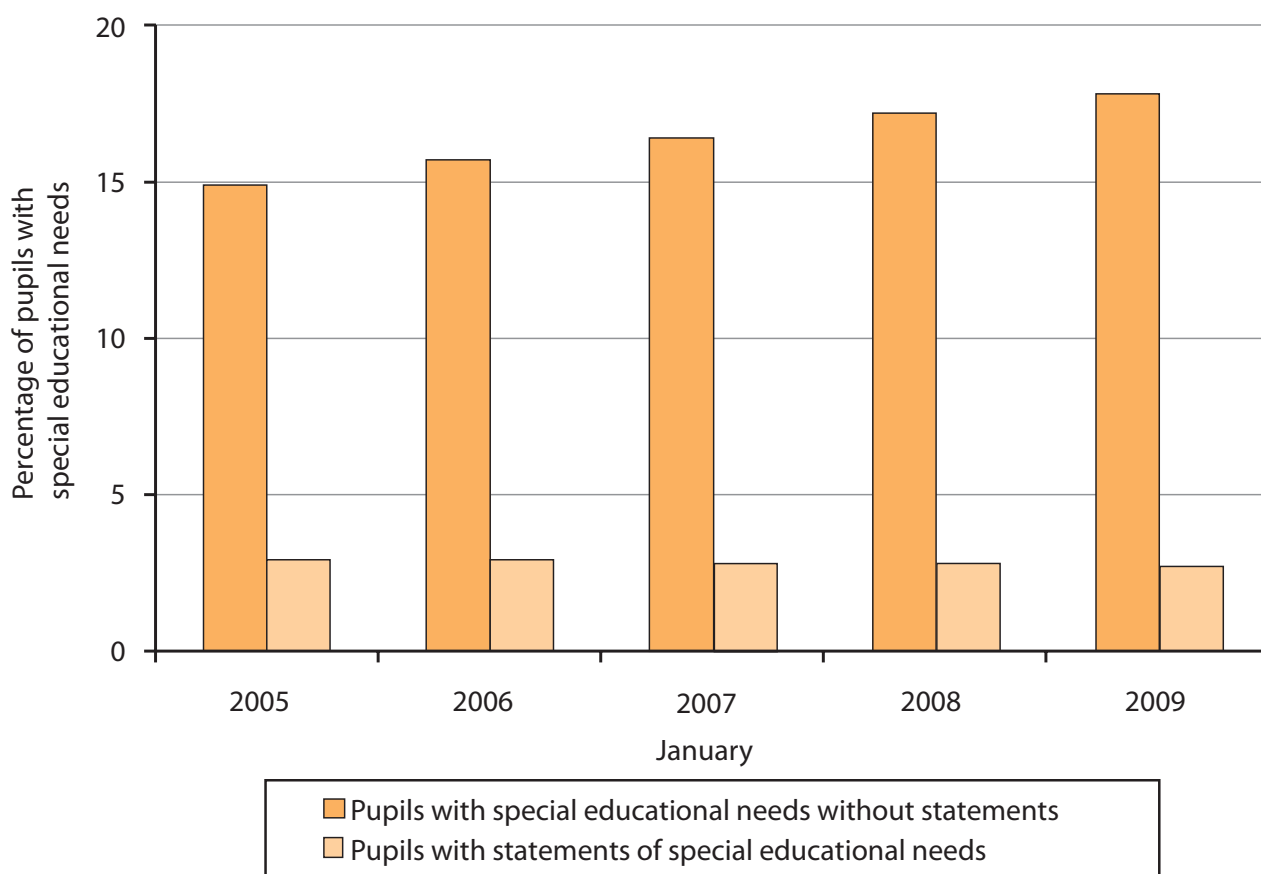
Figure 1.1 shows the percentage of all pupils in England with special educational needs from 2005 to 2009. It shows the percentages of pupils without

statements (pupils at School Action and School Action Plus) and with statements in the January of each of the years.

The combined number of pupils at School Action, School Action Plus or with statements increased from around 18 per cent of all pupils in 2005 to approximately 21 per cent in 2009.

Among all pupils, the proportion of pupils with statements remained fairly stable ranging between 2.9 per cent (243,000 pupils) in 2005 and 2.7 per cent (222,000 pupils) in 2009. Over the same period the proportion of all pupils with special educational needs without statements increased from 14.9 per cent (1,231,000 pupils) in 2005 to 17.8 per cent (1,434,000 pupils) in 2009.

**Figure 1.1: Percentage of pupils at all schools with special educational needs, 2005 to 2009**



Web based Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show the numbers and percentages of pupils with special educational needs and contain a breakdown by type of school.

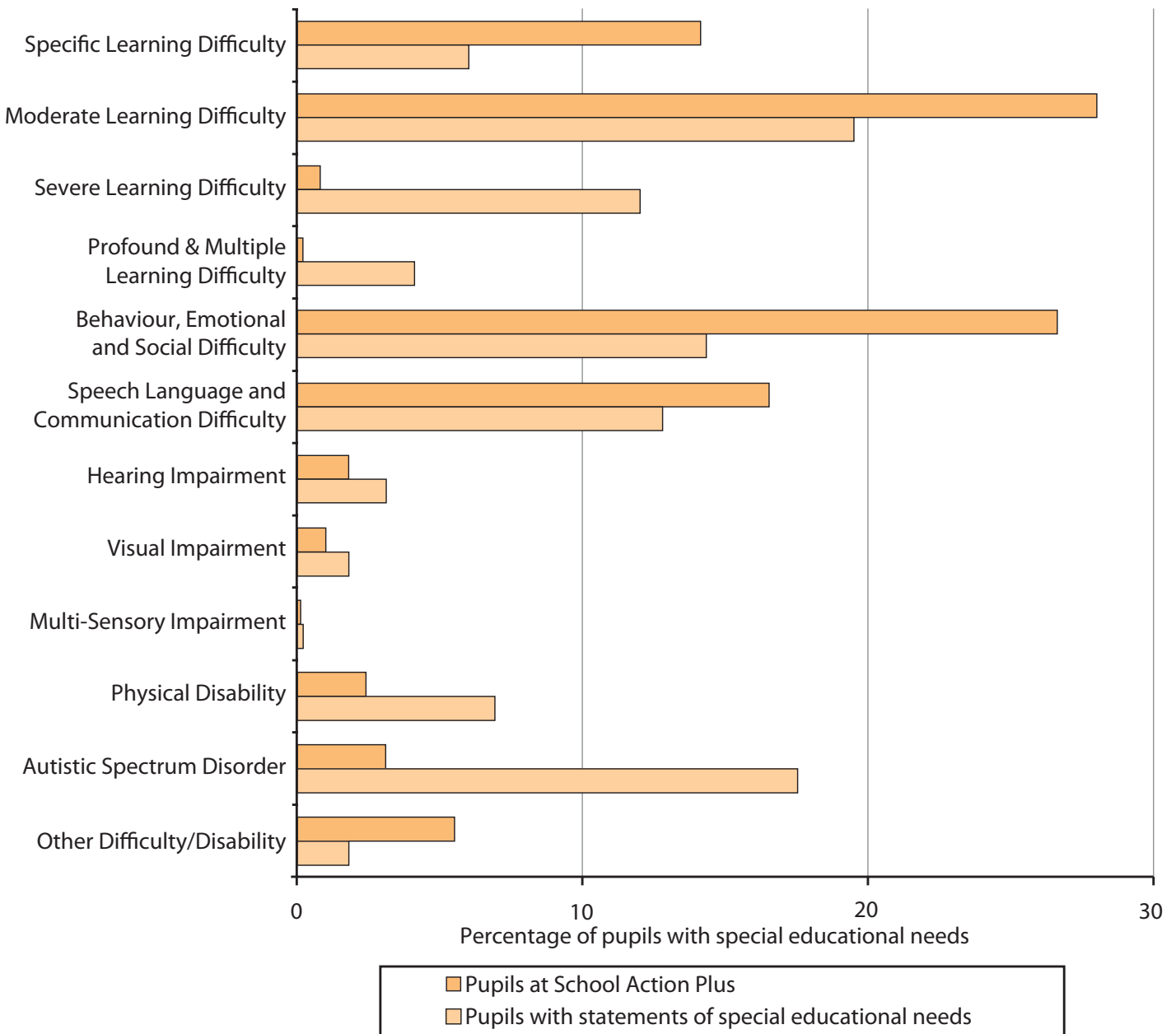
The proportion of pupils with special educational needs was slightly higher at secondary school compared to primary school. Special schools were the most common type of school for pupils with statements (83,000 of the 222,000 pupils with statements in 2009 attended a special school). In 2009, 97.3 per cent of pupils at special schools had statements. This was not surprising as pupils attending special schools almost always have statements.

### Prevalence of primary type of special educational need among all pupils

Figure 1.2 shows percentages of pupils who were under each of the 12 primary types of need (e.g. pupils with specific learning difficulty, hearing impaired, etc) at School Action Plus and with statements in 2009. Primary need information is only available for these two groups.

Of the 211,000 pupils with statements in 2009, the most common type of primary need was moderate learning difficulties (19.5 per cent), and the least common was multi-sensory impairment (0.2 per cent). The same two categories were also most and least prevalent among the 467,000 pupils at School Action Plus. These figures differ from those quoted in the previous section as not all schools were included here – see Data Annex 1 for more details.

**Figure 1.2: Percentage of pupils by each primary type of need at School Action Plus and with statements in 2009**



Web based Tables 1.3 and 1.4 show the numbers and percentages of pupils at School Action Plus and with statements by primary type of need and school type for 2008 and 2009.

In January 2009, 26.3 per cent of all primary school pupils at School Action Plus or with statements had moderate learning difficulties. This was the most common type of primary need in primary schools.

In January 2009, 30.6 per cent of all secondary school pupils at School Action Plus or with statements had behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. This was the most common type of primary need in secondary schools.

Pupils at special schools were most likely to have severe learning difficulties (23.6 per cent).

## Boys and girls with special educational needs

Figure 1.3 shows the percentage of boys and girls with special educational needs. It shows the numbers without statements (pupils at School Action and School Action Plus) and with statements, in January 2008 and 2009.

Boys were more than two and a half times more likely than girls to have statements. In 2009, 2.4 per cent of boys (90,000 pupils) had statements compared to 0.9 per cent of girls (33,000 pupils).

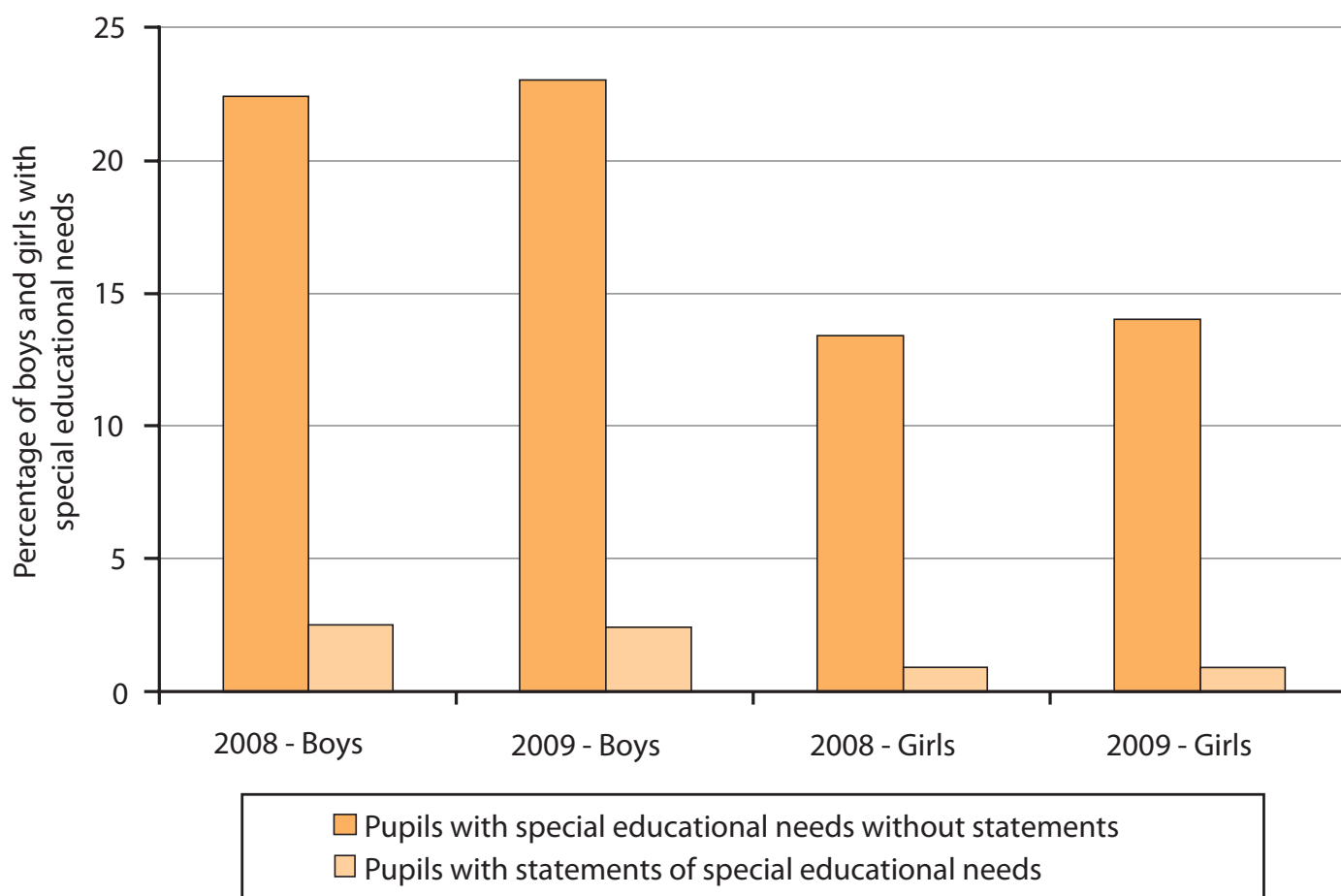
There were also more boys with special educational needs without statements. In 2009, 23.0 per cent

of boys (859,000 pupils) were at School Action and at School Action Plus compared to 14.0 per cent of girls (507,000).

The percentage of boys and girls at School Action and at School Action Plus increased between 2008 and 2009 but decreased slightly for those with statements.

Web based Tables 1.5 and 1.6 show the numbers and percentages of boys and girls with special educational needs at School Action, School Action Plus and with statements in 2008 and 2009. Table 1.7 also shows data for pupils in special schools in 2009.

**Figure 1.3: Percentage of boys and girls with special educational needs in 2008 and 2009**



### Percentage of primary type of special educational need among boys and girls

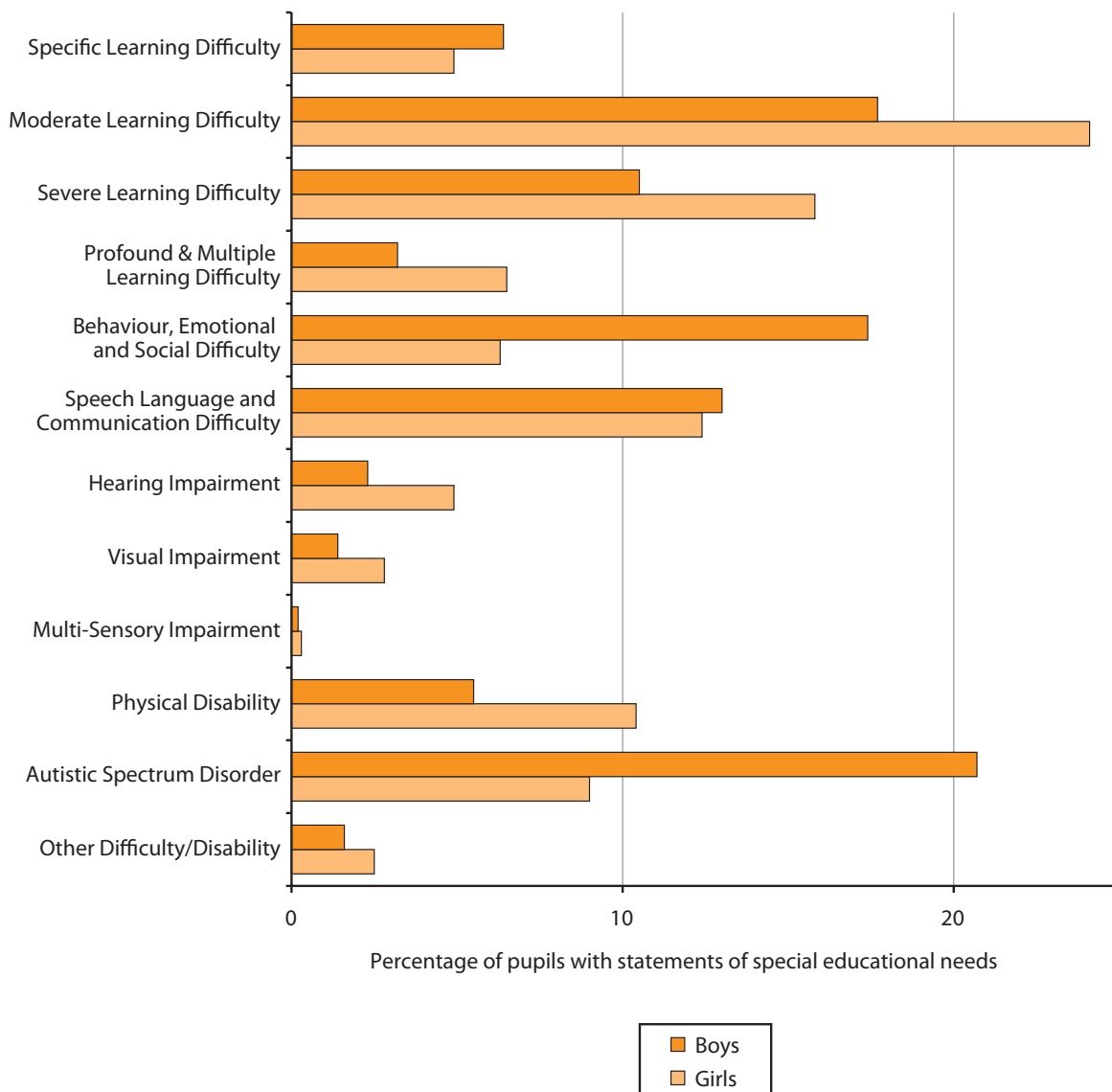
Figure 1.4 shows the percentage of boys and girls under each of the primary types of special educational need with statements in January 2009.

Boys with statements were most likely to have autistic spectrum disorder and just over a fifth of boys with statements had this as their primary need. Girls with statements were most likely to have moderate learning difficulties and just under

a quarter of girls with statements had this as their primary need.

Boys with statements were more than twice as likely to have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder as their primary need compared to girls with statements. Girls with statements were more than twice as likely to have profound and multiple learning difficulties or hearing impairments as their primary need compared to boys with statements.

**Figure 1.4: Percentage of boys and girls of each primary type of need with statements in 2009**



Web based Tables 1.8 and 1.9 show the numbers and percentages of pupils at School Action Plus and with statements by type of need in 2008 and 2009.

Table 1.9 shows that, at School Action Plus, boys were most likely to have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (28.7 per cent), while girls were most likely to have moderate learning difficulties (31.9 per cent). Boys were three times more likely to have autistic spectrum disorder compared to girls. Girls were more than twice as likely as boys to have hearing impairments.

### Pupils with special educational needs by age

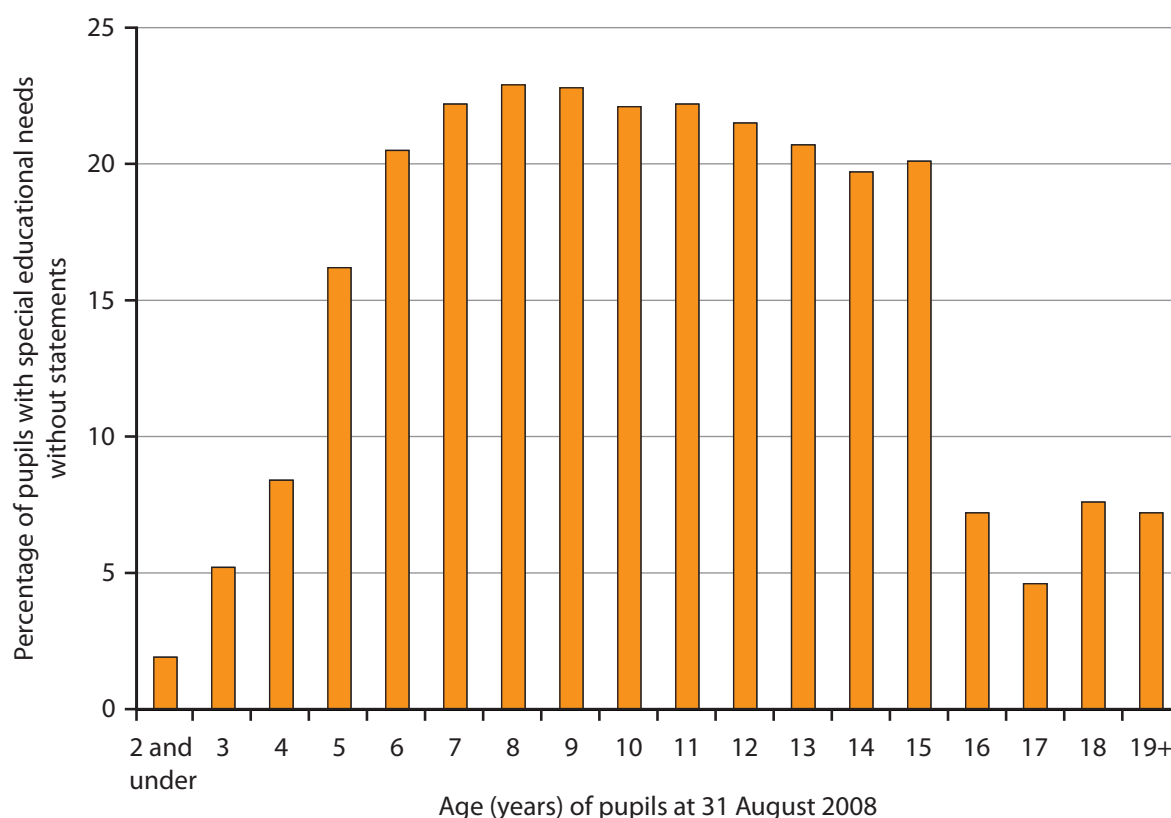
Figures 1.5 and 1.6 show the percentages of pupils with special educational needs, with and without statements at January 2009, according to their age in years at the start of the academic year.

The percentage of pupils with special educational needs without statements increases steadily in each year group up to the age of 8. 8.4 per cent of pupils aged 4 years had special educational needs without statements in 2009. This increases to a maximum of 22.9 per cent for pupils aged 8 years. The percentages of pupils without statements decreases slightly in each year group between the ages of 8 and 15 years.

Pupils generally attend school between the ages of 4 and 15 years (ages at start of academic year), so figures outside this age range should be treated with caution, due to the small numbers of pupils involved.

Web based Tables 1.5 and 1.6 show the numbers and percentages of pupils at School Action, School Action Plus and with statements by age in years in 2008 and 2009. Table 1.7 also shows data for pupils who were at special schools in 2009.

**Figure 1.5: Percentage of pupils with special educational needs without statements in 2009 by their age at the start of the academic year**



**Figure 1.6: Percentage of pupils with statements in 2009 by their age at the start of the academic year**

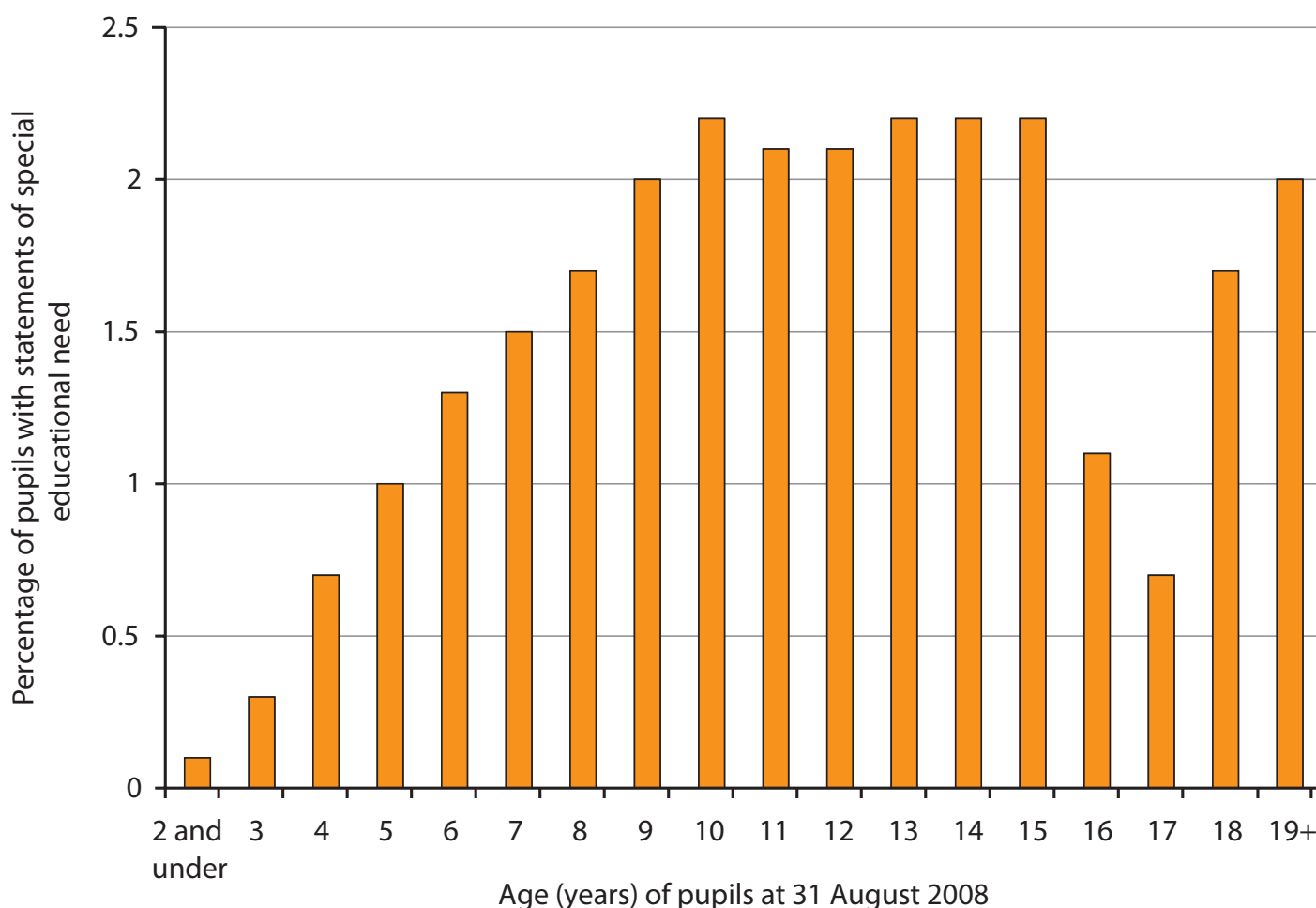


Figure 1.6 shows that the percentage of pupils with statements increases steadily (but at a slower rate than those with special educational needs without statements) up to the age of 10 years. 0.7 per cent of pupils aged 4 years had statements in 2009 but this increased to a maximum of 2.2 per cent of pupils aged 10 years. The percentages of pupils with statements remained fairly stable between the ages of 10 and 15 years.

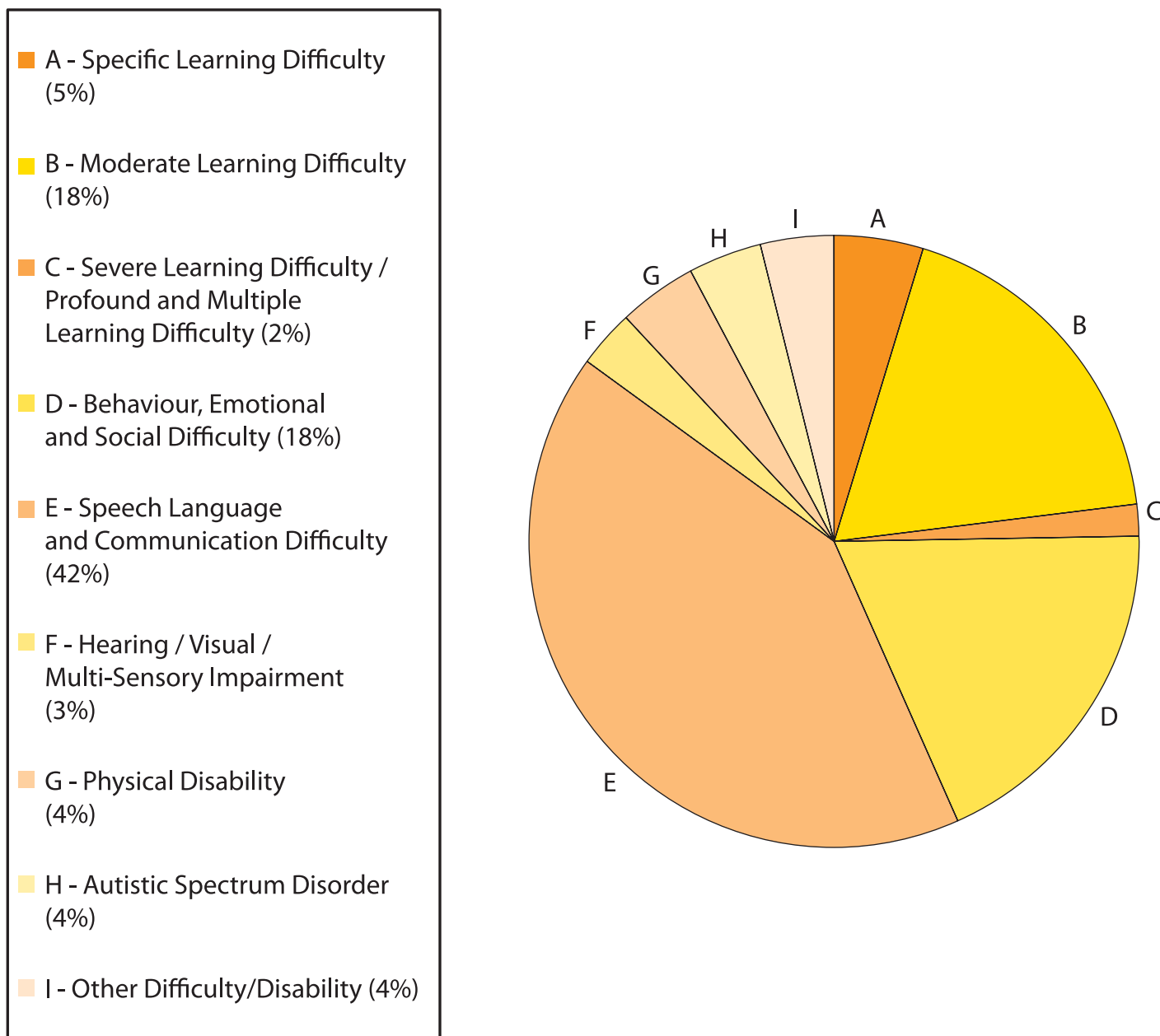
### Prevalence of primary type of special educational need among pupils of different ages

Figures 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9 show that in January 2009 pupils aged under 7 years at School Action Plus

were most likely to have speech language and communication difficulties. Between the ages of 7 and 11 years, pupils at School Action Plus were most likely to have moderate learning difficulties and between 12 and 17 years the most common type of need was behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. In Figures 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9 the severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties categories have been merged to form one group as have the hearing, visual and multi-sensory impairment categories. These were merged as there were small numbers of pupils in the individual groups.

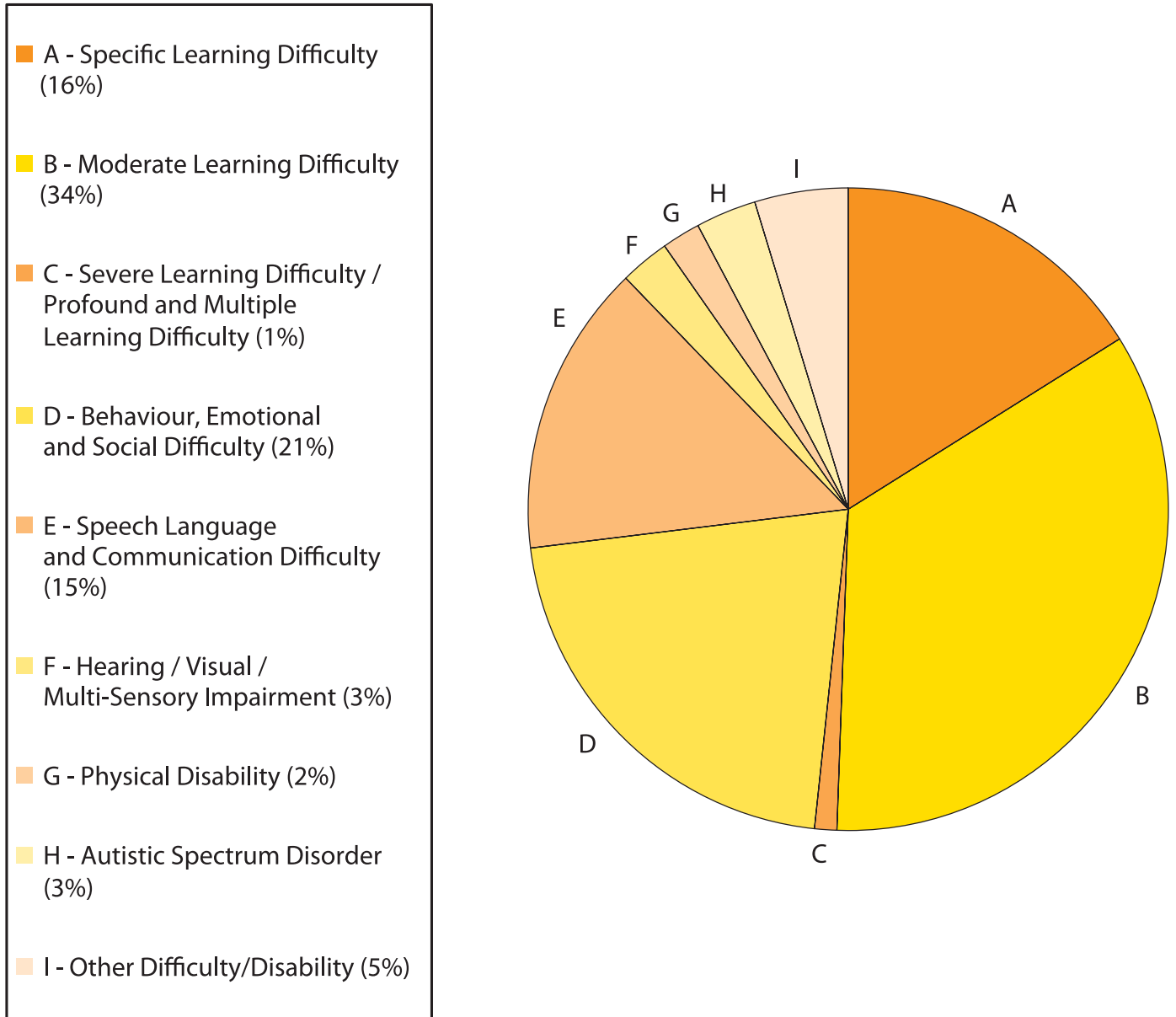


**Figure 1.7: Percentages of primary type of need among pupils aged under 7 years at School Action Plus in 2009\***



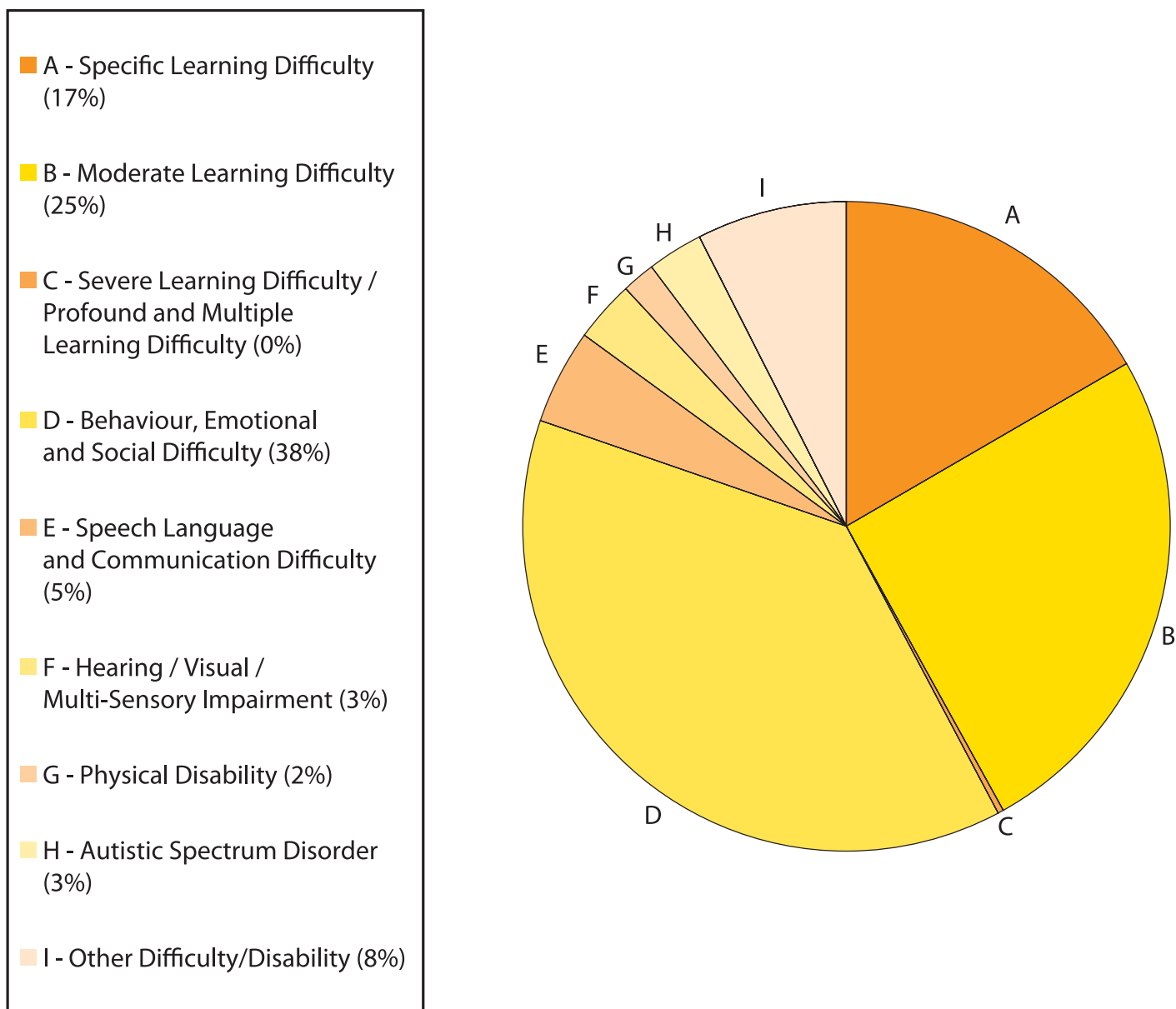
\* Percentages in the key were derived from rounded data.

**Figure 1.8: Percentages of primary type of need among pupils aged between 7 and 11 years at School Action Plus in 2009\***



\* Percentages in the key were derived from rounded data.

**Figure 1.9: Percentages of primary type of need among pupils aged between 12 and 17 years at School Action Plus in 2009\***



\* Percentages in the key were derived from rounded data.

Web based Table 1.13 shows that, of the pupils with statements in 2009, autistic spectrum disorder was the most common type of need for pupils aged between 4 and 10 years. Moderate learning difficulties was the most prevalent type of need between the ages of 11 and 15 years.

**Prevalence of special educational needs across the ethnic groups**

Figures 1.10 and 1.11 show the January 2009 figures broken down by ethnic group. Figure 1.10 shows that at primary school, black pupils were most likely and Chinese pupils were least likely to have special educational needs.

Figure 1.11 shows that at secondary school, white, mixed race and black pupils were most likely and

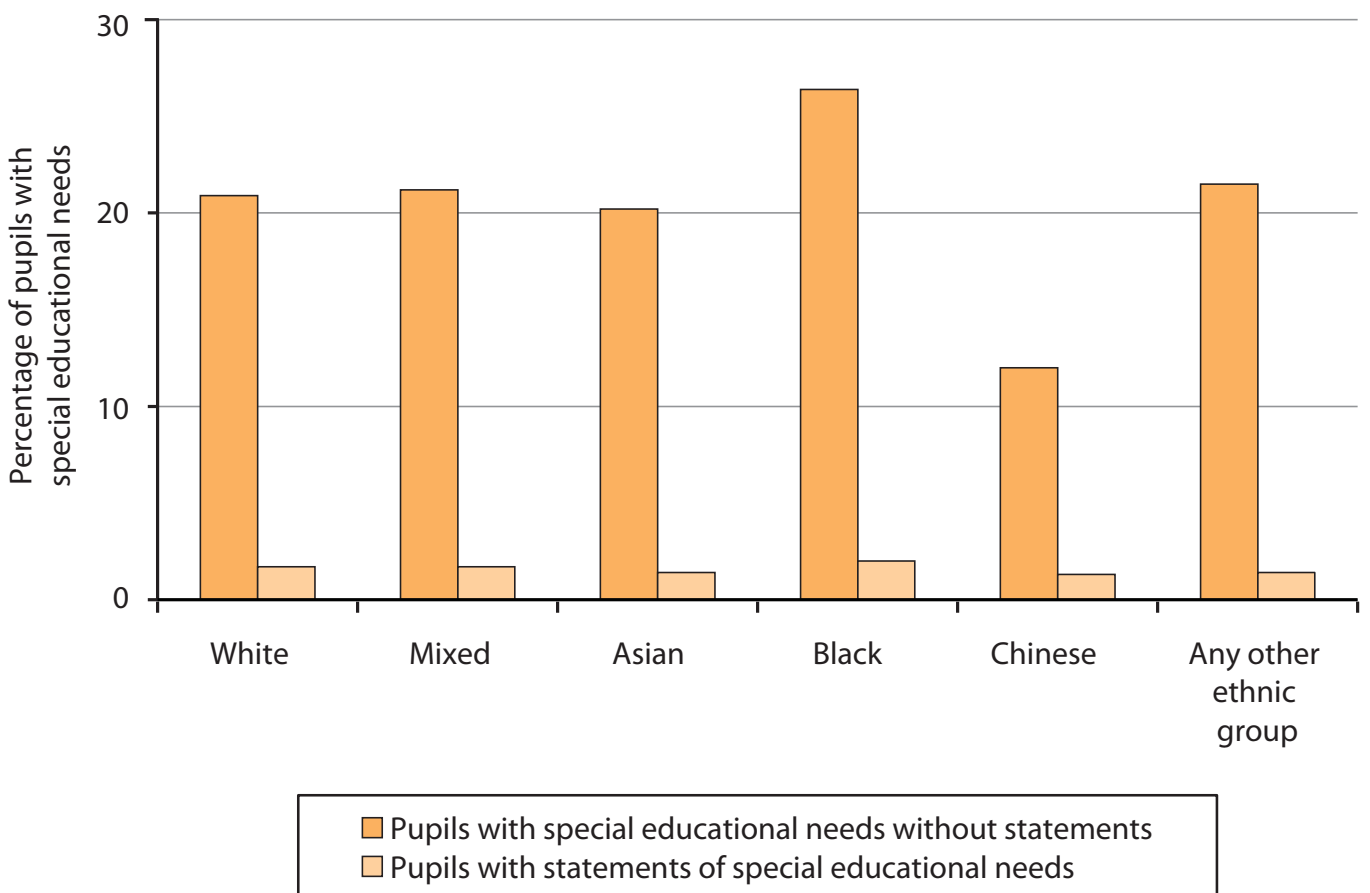
Chinese pupils were least likely to have statements. Black pupils were most likely to have special educational needs, without statements.

Web based Tables 1.14 to 1.17 show the numbers and percentages for 2008 and 2009. Table 1.18 shows the figures for special schools in 2009.

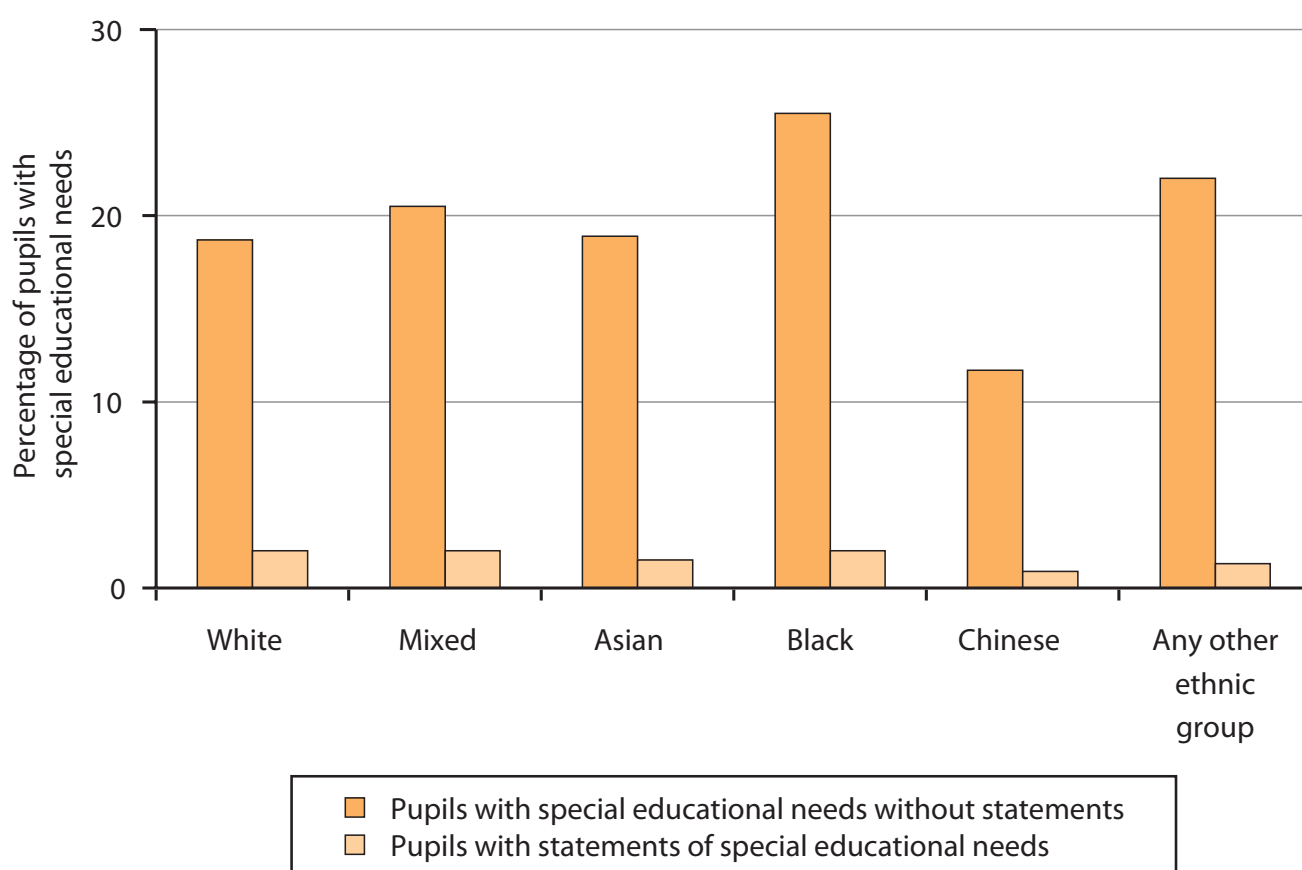
**Prevalence of primary type of special educational need among pupils of different ethnic groups**

Web based Tables 1.19 and 1.20 show the number and percentage of pupils who had special educational needs in 2008 broken down by ethnic group.

**Figure 1.10: Percentage of pupils at primary schools with special educational needs in 2009 by ethnic group**



**Figure 1.11: Percentage of pupils at secondary schools with special educational needs in 2009 by ethnic group**



Web based Tables 1.21 and 1.22 show the 2009 figures. White and Asian pupils at School Action Plus and with statements were most likely to have moderate learning difficulties. Black and mixed race pupils at School Action Plus were most likely to have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Black and mixed race pupils with statements were most likely to have autistic spectrum disorder.

### **Pupils with special educational needs by eligibility for free school meals**

Figure 1.12 shows the percentage of pupils with special educational needs at primary, secondary and special schools in January 2009 who were eligible for free school meals. The percentage for pupils with no special educational needs at special schools should be treated with caution due to low numbers in the group.

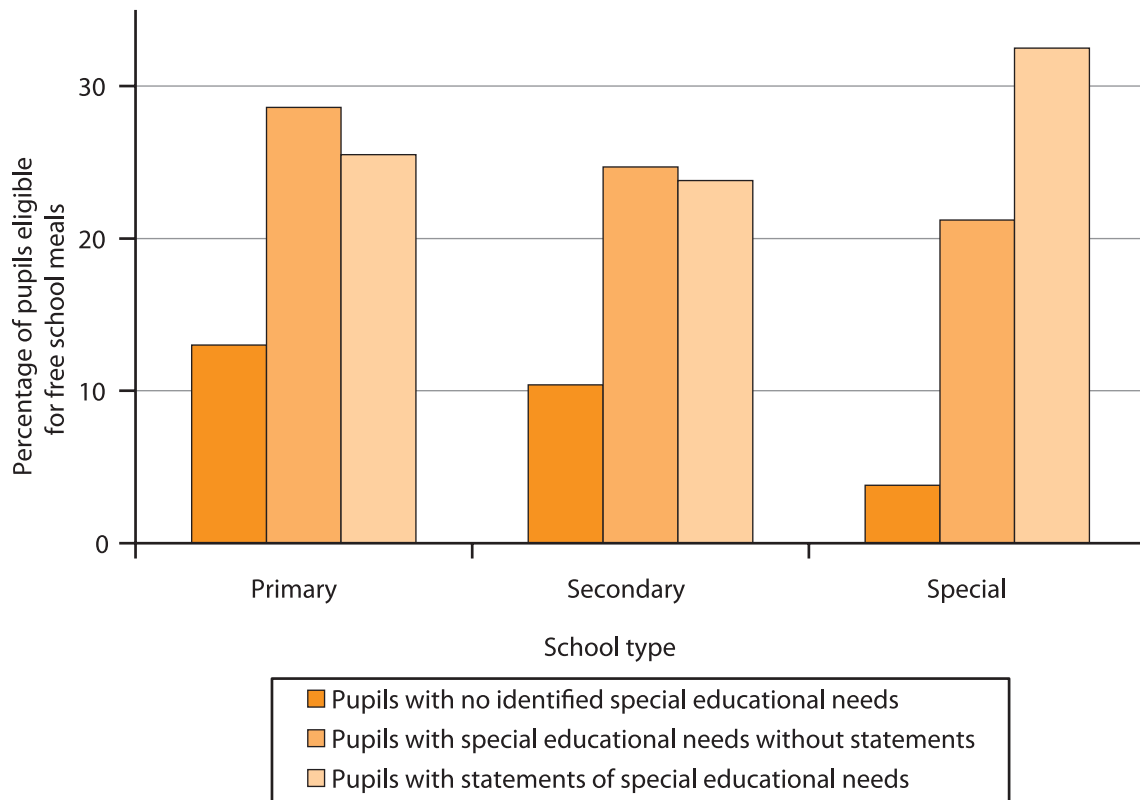
Pupils with special educational needs were far more likely to be eligible for free school meals than those without special educational needs.

At primary school, pupils with special educational needs without statements were more than twice as likely to be eligible for free school meals, than those with no special educational needs. Those with statements were almost twice as likely to be eligible as those without special educational needs.

Secondary school pupils with special educational needs were more than twice as likely to be eligible for free school meals, compared to those with no special educational needs, whether or not they had statements.

Pupils were more likely to be eligible for free school meals at primary than at secondary school. Pupils with statements at special schools were most likely

**Figure 1.12: Percentage of pupils with special educational needs who were eligible for free school meals by school type in 2009**



to be eligible for free school meals, where 32.5 per cent of pupils were eligible. At primary and secondary schools, pupils with special educational needs, without statements, were more likely to be eligible for free school meals than those with statements.

Web based Tables 1.23 and 1.24 show the numbers and percentages of pupils with special educational needs who were eligible for free school meals in 2008 and 2009.

### Prevalence of primary type of special educational need among pupils who were eligible for free school meals

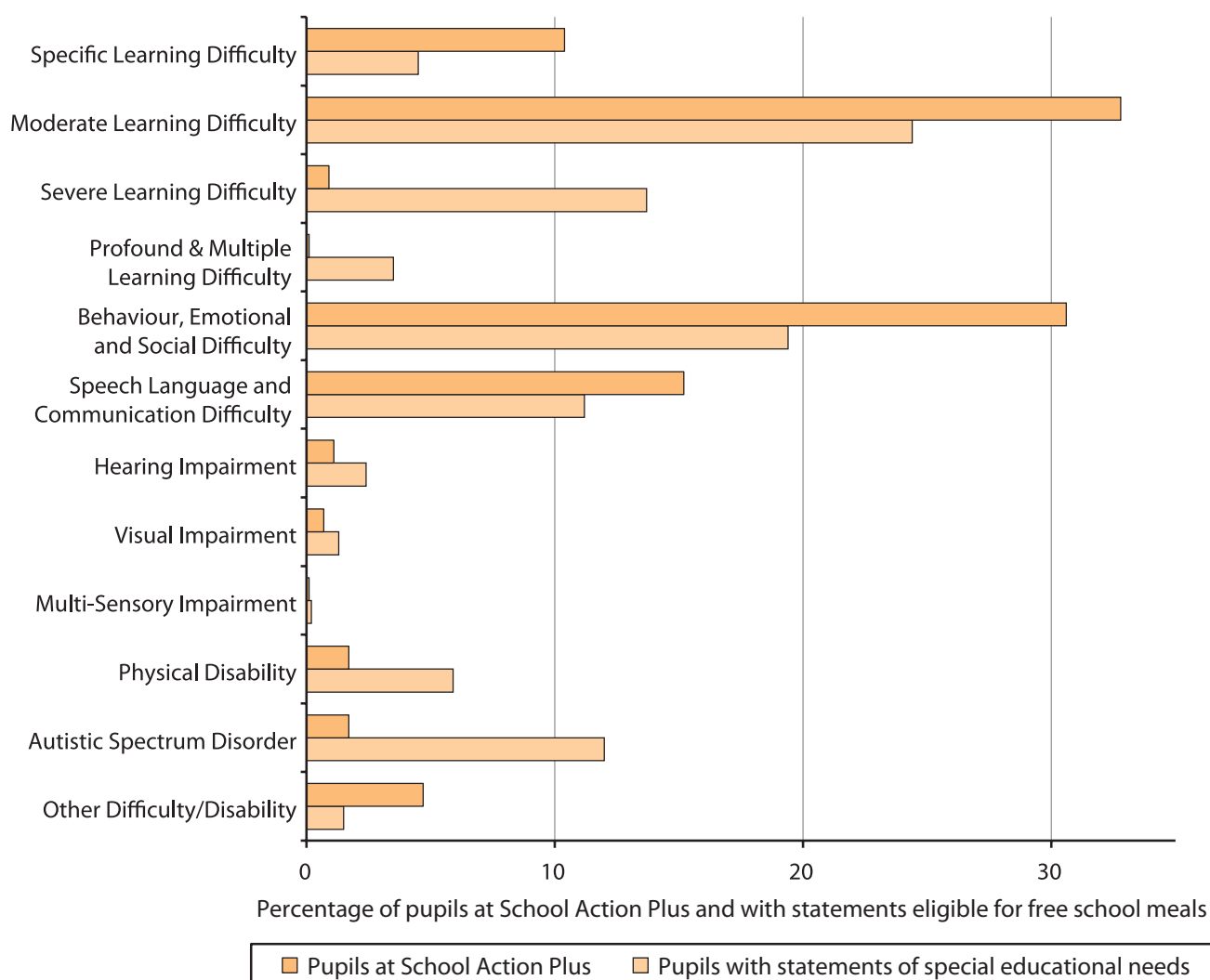
Figure 1.13 shows the percentage of pupils at School Action Plus or with statements who were eligible for free school meals in January 2009.

Of the pupils at School Action Plus who were eligible for free school meals, moderate learning difficulties (32.8 per cent) closely followed by behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (30.6 per cent) were the most common primary types of need.

A similar pattern was shown for the 59,000 pupils with statements in 2009 who were eligible for free school meals, where 24.4 per cent had moderate learning difficulties and 19.4 per cent had behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Web based Tables 1.25 and 1.26 show the numbers and percentages for 2008 and 2009. Tables 1.25 and 1.26 also contain the number and percentage of pupils with special educational needs who were not eligible for free school meals.

**Figure 1.13: Percentage of pupils at School Action Plus or with statements of special educational needs who were eligible for free school meals in 2009 by primary type of need**



### Government Office Region and local authority level analysis

Government Office Region and local authority level figures on the proportion of pupils with special educational needs can be found in Statistical First Releases (which also contain additional analysis at national level):

**DCSF: Special Educational Needs in England: January 2009** available at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000852/index.shtml> and

**DCSF: Special Educational Needs in England: January 2008** available at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000794/index.shtml>.

The wide variations in both the percentage of pupils with special educational needs, and the way in which they are categorised has become well known as a result of the School Census.

The reasons underlying these variations is far from clear, and a DCSF-commissioned study on the subject, undertaken by the National Children's Bureau in association with the Thomas Coram Research Unit will be published in late 2009. It will be available on the DCSF research website.

## Changes in provision for special educational need over time

### Key findings

Pupils with statements of special educational need have them for a long time. In 2008, 78.2 per cent of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 (mainly aged 16 years), with statements in the January of that year, also had statements in January 2003.

Pupils at School Action Plus tend to remain at School Action Plus for a relatively short period of time compared to those with statements. In 2008, 30.2 per cent of pupils at School Action Plus at Key Stage 4 were also at School Action Plus in 2003. A similar trend was shown for pupils at School Action.





### Changes in provision for pupils with statements of special educational need

All numbers which appear in this section were taken from the National Pupil Database (see Data Annex 1 for further details). Data are based on the academic year and special educational need provision was recorded in the January of the same year. Web based Table 1.27 contains the data quoted in the remainder of this chapter.

### Changes in provision for pupils with statements

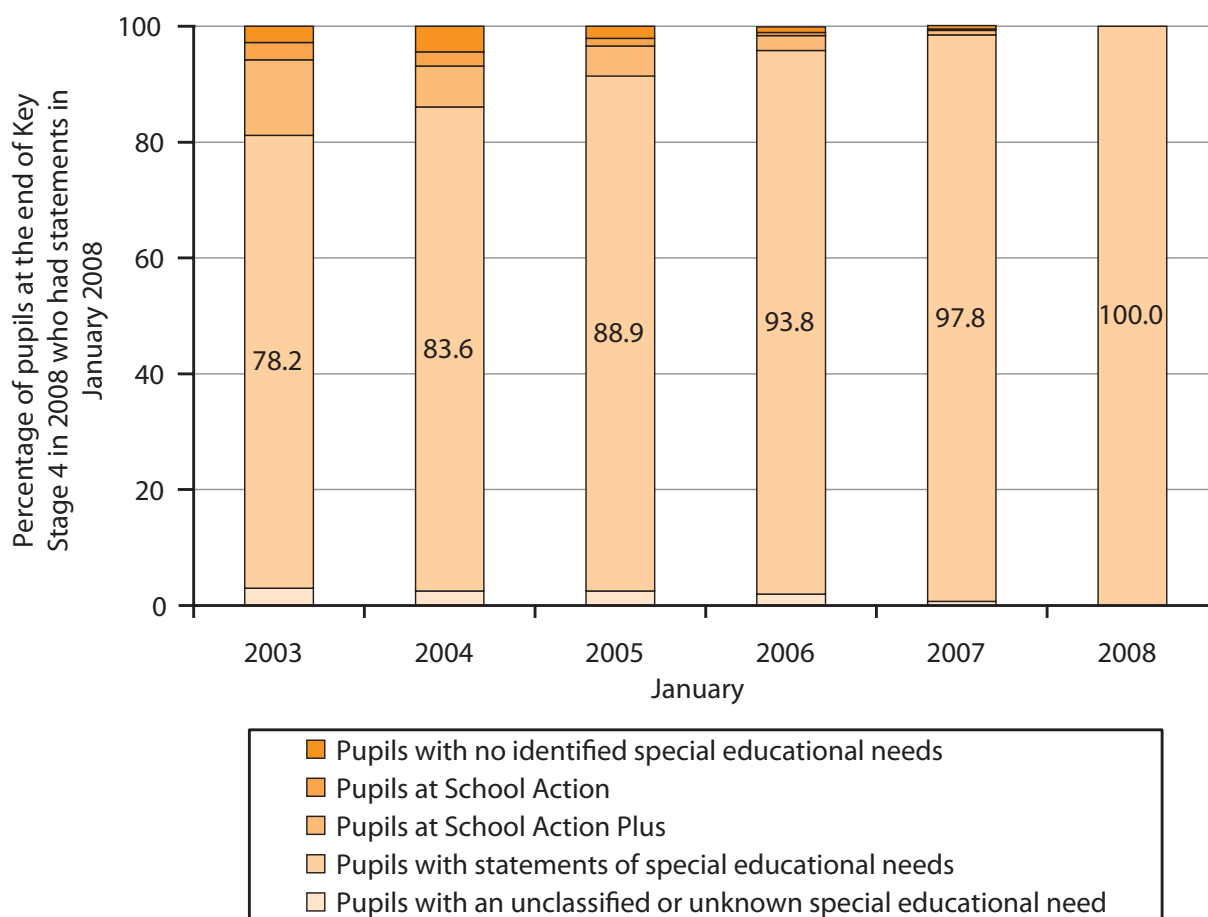
Figure 1.14 shows the percentage of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 (KS4) in 2008 (those who were mainly aged 16 years taking their GCSE or equivalent qualifications) who had statements in

the January of that year by their previous provision between 2003 and 2007.

It displays the percentage of the 22,900 pupils with statements in 2008 by their previous provisions between 2003 and 2007. For example, of the 22,900 pupils with statements of special educational need at KS4 in 2008, 97.8 per cent also had statements in 2007 and 78.2 per cent also had statements in 2003. This suggests that pupils with statements tend to have them for some time.

Figure 1.14 shows that pupils were most likely to be at School Action Plus before having statements of special educational needs. Of those who had statements in 2008, 13.0 per cent were at School Action Plus in 2003.

**Figure 1.14: Percentage of pupils at the end of KS4 in 2008 with statements of special educational needs in the January of that year by their previous provision between January 2003 and 2007**



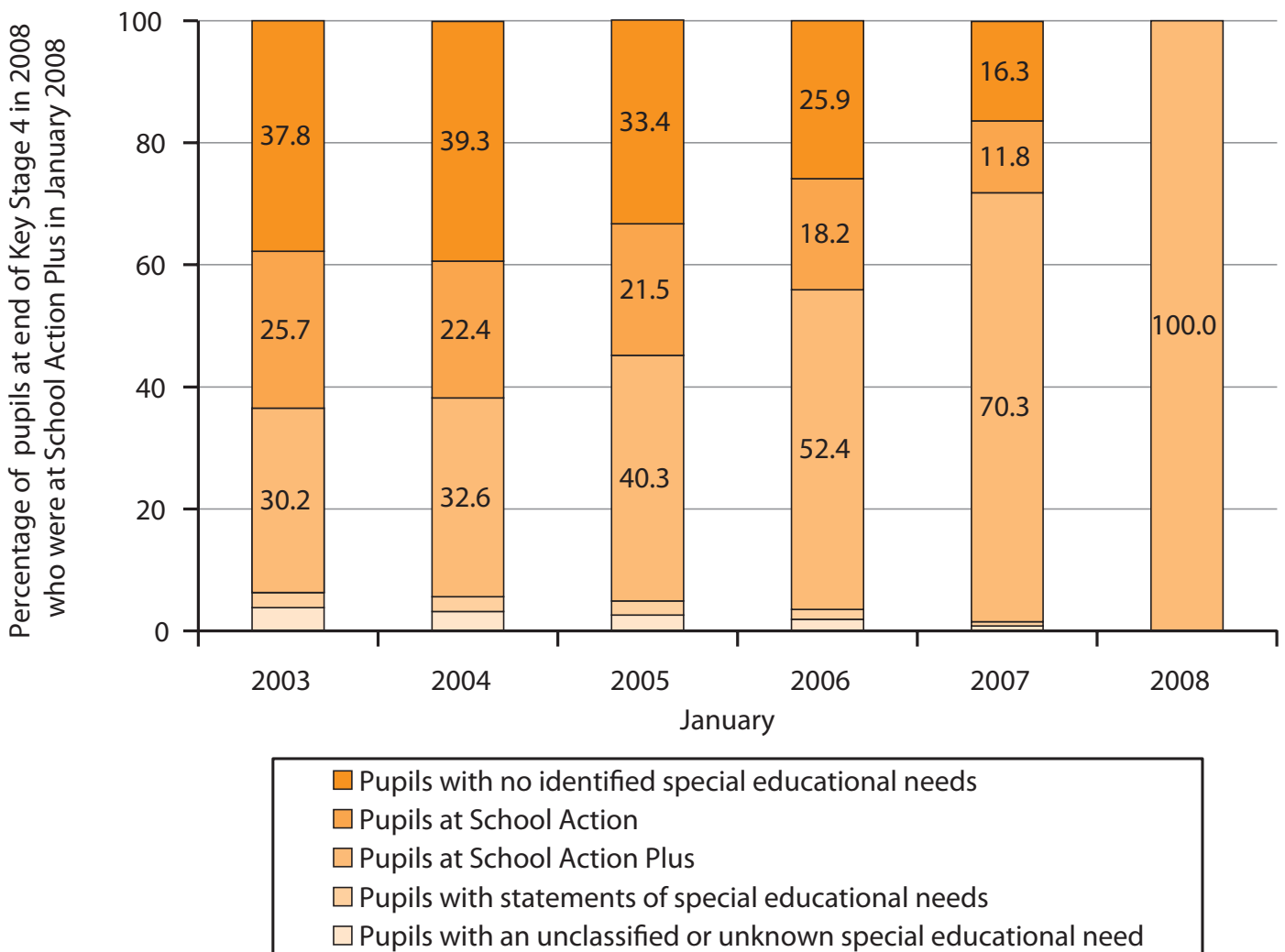
### Changes in provision for pupils at School Action Plus

Figure 1.15 shows the provision for special educational need in previous years for pupils at School Action Plus at Key Stage 4 in 2008.

Of the 35,000 pupils at School Action Plus at KS4, 70.3 per cent were also at School Action Plus in 2007 and only 30.2 per cent in 2003. This suggests that pupils at School Action Plus tended to stay at School Action Plus for a relatively short period of time compared to those with statements.

Figure 1.15 shows that pupils were most likely to have no identified special educational needs before being classified under School Action Plus. Pupils were next most likely to be at School Action before being classified under School Action Plus. In 2008, 37.8 per cent of those at School Action Plus had no identified special educational needs in 2003, while 25.7 per cent were at School Action.

**Figure 1.15: Percentage of pupils at the end of KS4 in 2008 at School Action Plus in the January of that year by their previous provision between January 2003 and 2007**



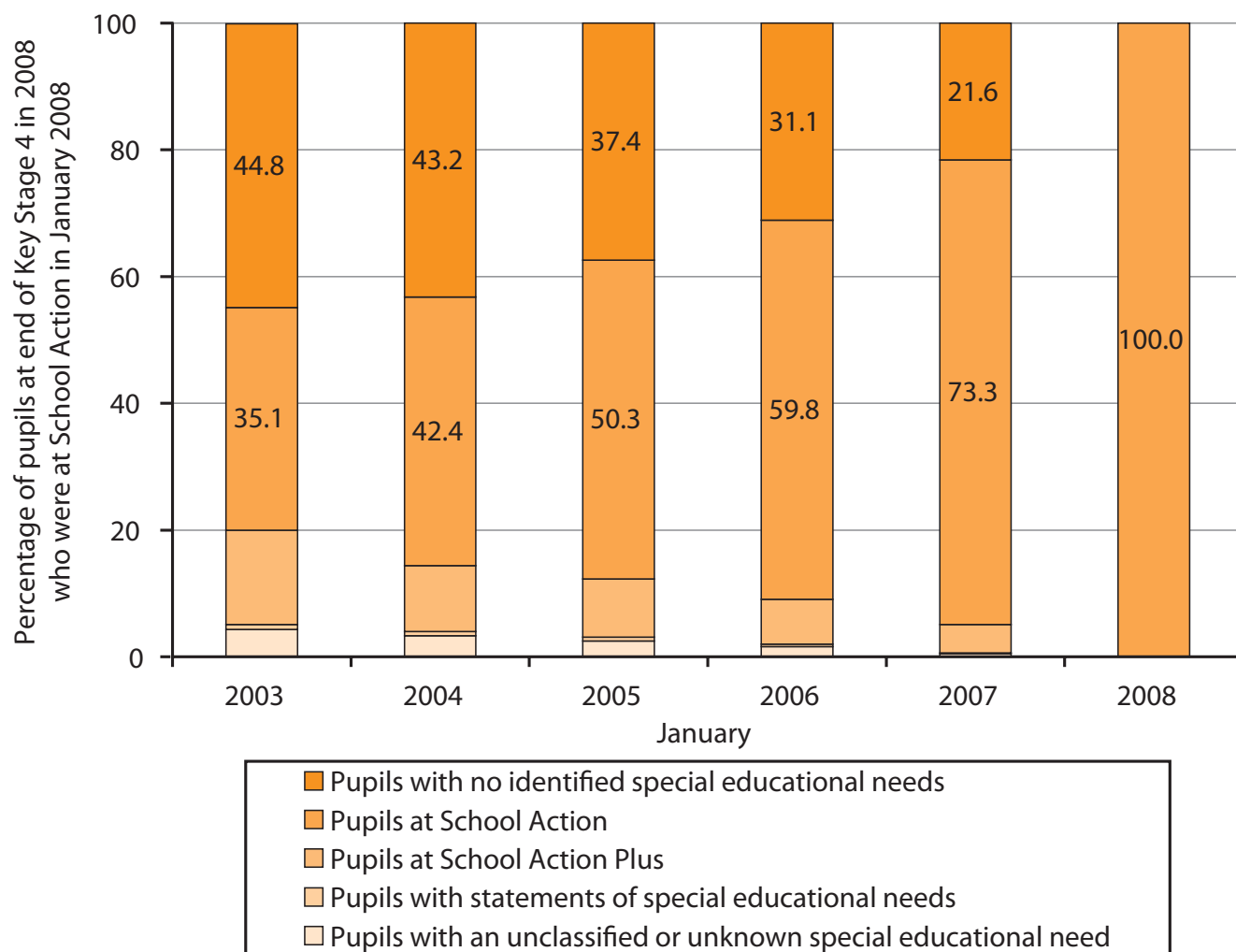
### Changes in provision for pupils at School Action

Figure 1.16 shows the provision for special educational need in previous years for pupils at School Action at Key Stage 4 in 2008.

Of the 70,700 pupils at School Action at KS4 in 2008, 73.3 per cent were also at School Action in 2007 and only 35.1 per cent in 2003. This suggests that pupils at School Action tend to stay at School Action for a relatively short period of time compared to the length of time they have a statement.

Figure 1.16 shows that pupils were most likely to have no identified special educational needs before being classified under School Action. Pupils were next most likely to be at School Action Plus before being classified under School Action. In 2008, 44.8 per cent of those at School Action had no identified special educational needs in 2003, while 14.9 per cent were at School Action Plus.

**Figure 1.16: Percentage of pupils at the end of KS4 in 2008 who were at School Action in the January of that year by their previous provision between January 2003 and 2007**



## Data Annex I: Characteristics of pupils with special educational needs

Data for Tables 1.1 to 1.26 were taken from the DCSF Statistical First Releases (SFR) called '**Special Educational Needs in England: January 2008**' and '**Special Educational Needs in England: January 2009**' available at

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000794/index.shtml>  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000852/index.shtml>.

Tables 1.1 to 1.26 contain data for pupils at a number of different schools including maintained schools (including academies, City Technology Colleges (CTCs), community, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled, foundation, community special and foundation special schools) and other schools (independent, non-maintained special schools and Pupil Referral Units). Tables differ in their coverage of pupils from the different types of schools. The footnotes in each of the tables explain which pupils and schools were included. Special educational need provision (pupils at School Action, School Action Plus and with statements) was recorded in January each year. Numbers were rounded to the nearest 10 in Tables 1.1 to 1.26 and an 'x' represents a number or percentage based on fewer than 5. Totals may not appear to equal the sum of the component parts because numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.

The data sources used in Tables 1.1 to 1.26 were the 2008 and 2009 School Censuses. Details on the School Census data collection can be found at

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/ims/datacollections/sc2009/>.

Table 1.27 contains data for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 at maintained schools. Special educational need provision was recorded in January each year. All numbers which appear in Table 1.27 were rounded to the nearest 100 if they exceeded 1,000 and to the nearest 10 otherwise. Numbers from 1 to 5 inclusive were suppressed, being replaced in the tables by a hyphen (-). Percentages were rounded to 1 decimal place unless the numerator was five or less or the denominator was 10 or less, in which case they were suppressed and replaced by a hyphen. Note that percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

The data source used in Table 1.27 was the National Pupil Database (NPD). The NPD holds the tests and exam results at each Key Stage for all pupils at maintained schools in England. It also holds individual pupil level attainment data for pupils in non-maintained and independent schools who take the tests/exams. Pupil characteristic information for maintained schools only are also included in the NPD (such as age, gender, ethnicity etc), which is obtained by matching records to the School Census.

The 27 tables referenced within chapter 1 are listed below. The tables can be found in the accompanying downloadable spreadsheets at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000851/index.shtml>.

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