



FASD-Informed Education Toolkit: Reduce demand in school – SATs tests for those with complex needs

Guidance in the [2026 key stage 2 tests: special consideration guidance](#), updated on 9 March 2026, states that children who are *not in a fit physical or mental state to take the tests* may be recorded with the **'U' code (unable to access)** on the test attendance register. The guidance also states that where a child *has a sensory or physical disability or condition that prevents them from accessing the tests, even with access arrangements or modified test materials*, the **'U' code (unable to access)** will apply. This can help families and schools think more carefully about whether SATs are appropriate for a child with significant needs.

If your class is talking about SATs and the pressure is building, reasonable adjustments can be made to reduce that demand. For example, the child may be able to step out of SATs-focused discussions or tests and do a different, activity in school.

For children with pre-natal alcohol exposure, likely FASD or confirmed FASD and co-occurring conditions, reducing demand can be a vital part of meeting their needs, lowering stress, and protecting emotional regulation.

FASD differentiated curriculum

Children with FASD need a differentiated curriculum that matches their developmental profile, not just their age or year group. This means adapting the pace, language, level of abstraction, amount of writing, and expectations around memory, organisation, and independence. Learning is often more successful when tasks are broken into small steps, taught explicitly, repeated regularly, and supported with visuals, routine, and practical activities. A differentiated approach does not lower value or belonging; it makes learning more accessible and helps the child experience success more often.

The importance of declarative language

Declarative language can be especially helpful for children with FASD because it reduces pressure and supports thinking, rather than demanding an immediate response. Instead of giving repeated commands or asking lots of direct questions,

adults can make calm observations or offer simple information, such as “I can see that this feels hard”, “The pencil is on the table”, or “Sometimes it helps to start with just one question”. This style of language lowers threat, supports regulation, and helps the child notice, process, and decide what to do next. For children with FASD and co-occurring needs, declarative language can be an important part of reducing demand and creating emotional safety in school.

For more information, pop along to our [FASD Informed UK Education](http://www.fasdinformed.co.uk) website.



www.fasdinformed.co.uk

©fasd informed UK 2025

All rights reserved ©FASD Informed UK 2026

©FASD Hub SW 2026 Registration: 14658199