Ryhope Infant School Academy

SEND Policy

Updated: September 2026

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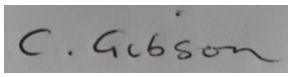
Ratified by: Board of Trustees

Signed: 

Chair of Trustees

Review Date: September 2027

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1. Statement of intent and principles

Ryhope Infant School Academy is committed to providing an ambitious, inclusive and high-quality education for every child, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school recognises that inclusion is not simply about where a child is taught; it is about belonging, participation, access, achievement, wellbeing and receiving the right support at the right time.

The school will use its best endeavours to secure the special educational provision called for by a pupil's special educational needs. All teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff.

- the child's views, strengths, interests, aspirations and lived experience are central to decision-making;
- parents and carers are valued as partners and are involved in planning and reviewing provision;
- needs are identified as early and accurately as possible and are not dependent on a formal diagnosis;
- high-quality, inclusive teaching and appropriate reasonable adjustments are the starting point for meeting need;
- support is graduated, evidence-informed, proportionate and regularly reviewed for impact;
- children with SEND are enabled to participate in the wider life of the school alongside their peers wherever this is appropriate and in their best interests;
- the curriculum is ambitious and adapted so that pupils can learn, communicate, develop independence and prepare for their next stage of education and life.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has been reviewed for September 2026 and has due regard to current legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Children and Families Act 2014, particularly Part 3;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, as amended, including the 2024 changes to the mandatory SENDCO qualification;
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments and the accessibility planning duty;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (current edition);
- School Admissions Code 2021;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (current statutory guidance);
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (statutory guidance);
- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, where applicable;
- relevant academy funding agreement, governance requirements and current Department for Education guidance.

The school also takes account of Sunderland's Local Offer and local SEND guidance. Where national SEND reforms are proposed or under consultation, the school will monitor developments but will not treat proposals as statutory requirements until they come into force.

3. Definitions

A child has special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A child of compulsory school age has a learning difficulty or disability if they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools.

Special educational provision is educational or training provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children of the same age. For children under compulsory school age, the statutory

definition also considers whether they are likely to fall within the definition when they reach compulsory school age if special educational provision is not made.

A disability does not automatically mean that a child has SEN. Equally, a child may have SEN without meeting the Equality Act definition of disability. The school considers its SEND and equality duties together.

4. Areas of special educational need

The SEND Code of Practice describes four broad areas of need. These are used to help the school plan provision; they are not labels and a child may have needs across more than one area.

Communication and interaction

This includes speech, language and communication needs and differences in social communication and interaction, including autistic pupils. The school considers how a child understands and uses language, communicates needs and ideas, interacts with others and accesses the learning and social environment.

Cognition and learning

This includes moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties. Support is based on the child's individual profile and barriers to learning rather than on a label alone.

Social, emotional and mental health

Children may experience difficulties that affect emotional regulation, relationships, engagement, attendance or behaviour. The school seeks to understand the underlying need and context. Behaviour is considered as a possible form of communication and does not, by itself, establish that a child has SEN.

Sensory and/or physical needs

This includes vision impairment, hearing impairment, multi-sensory impairment and physical disability. Some children require specialist advice, equipment, environmental adaptations or additional support to access learning and school life.

5. Inclusion, curriculum and quality first teaching

Quality first teaching, including adaptive teaching, is the first response to pupils who have or may have SEND. Teachers maintain high expectations while adapting teaching to remove barriers. Adaptations may include changes to explanation, modelling, language, task design, pace, scaffolding, grouping, environment, sensory demands, communication approaches, resources and methods of recording.

Ryhope Infant School Academy provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Where a pupil's developmental profile means that they are not yet able to engage meaningfully with subject-specific learning, the school may provide a personalised developmental curriculum. This is based on assessed need, communication, interaction, cognition, physical/sensory development, regulation, independence and engagement. It remains ambitious, purposeful and regularly reviewed, and does not represent a lowering of expectations.

For pupils working below the standard of national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study, the school will use appropriate statutory and non-statutory assessment approaches, including the Engagement Model where applicable. Other assessment tools may be used where they add useful information about small-step progress.

Interventions do not replace high-quality classroom teaching. Teachers remain responsible for pupils' learning, including when pupils receive targeted or specialist support outside the classroom.

6. Identification of SEND

Ryhope Infant School Academy aims to identify emerging needs early. Assessment considers the whole child and draws on a range of evidence, which may include:

- information from parents/carers and the child;
- information from previous settings and transition records;
- teacher observation and assessment, including progress from individual starting points;
- EYFS assessment and developmental information;
- screening and diagnostic assessment where appropriate;
- attendance, behaviour, wellbeing, communication and engagement information;
- response to quality first teaching, adaptations and targeted support;
- advice from health, education or social care professionals.

Slow progress or low attainment does not automatically mean that a child has SEN and should not automatically lead to SEND registration. Equally, attainment in line with age-related expectations does not rule out SEN. We consider whether a learning difficulty or disability is creating a barrier that requires special educational provision.

We will not delay appropriate support while waiting for a diagnosis. English as an additional language is not, in itself, SEN; assessment will distinguish language acquisition from possible special educational need. We will also consider other factors that may affect progress or wellbeing, such as attendance, safeguarding, family circumstances, disadvantage or medical needs, without assuming these constitute SEN.

7. The graduated approach: Assess–Plan–Do–Review

Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, school follows a cyclical graduated approach.

Assess

The class teacher and SENDCO establish a clear understanding of the pupil's strengths, needs, barriers and starting points, drawing on the child's and parents' views and, where appropriate, specialist advice.

Plan

The teacher, SENDCO, parents/carers and pupil agree outcomes, adjustments, interventions and support. The plan identifies who will deliver provision, its frequency or approach, how impact will be measured and when it will be reviewed.

Do

The class teacher retains responsibility for the pupil. Planned provision is implemented consistently, with the SENDCO supporting problem-solving, staff development and coordination where needed.

Review

Progress towards agreed outcomes and the effectiveness of provision are reviewed with parents/carers and the pupil. We consider quantitative and qualitative evidence and decides whether provision should continue, change, intensify or reduce. The cycle is repeated as required.

8. SEN Support and use of the Sunderland SEND Ranges

Pupils whose needs require special educational provision are recorded as receiving SEN Support unless they have an EHC plan. We may use local terminology or stages of support to describe increasing levels of provision, but statutory status remains SEN Support or EHC plan.

Staff use Sunderland SEND Ranges/descriptors, as one source of guidance to support identification, planning and discussion about provision. The Ranges do not replace professional judgement, the

graduated approach or the statutory test for an EHCP needs assessment. A particular Range does not automatically trigger, guarantee or prevent a request for an EHCP needs assessment.

Where specialist advice is required, school will discuss this with parents/carers and seek appropriate support. Provision may include targeted intervention, specialist strategies, communication support, sensory or physical adaptations, personalised resources, regulation support, staff training or advice from external professionals.

9. Education, Health and Care needs assessments and EHC plans

Where, despite relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet a pupil's SEN, the pupil has not made expected progress or requires provision that may be beyond that ordinarily available to the school. We will consider with parents/carers and relevant professionals whether an EHCP needs assessment should be requested.

The statutory decision about whether an EHCP needs assessment is necessary rests with the local authority and is based on the legal test. Parents/carers also have the right to request an assessment.

Where an EHCP plan is in place, school will use its best endeavours to secure the special educational provision specified in the plan and will ensure staff working with the pupil understand the relevant needs, outcomes and provision. We will cooperate with the local authority in statutory review processes.

EHCP plans must be reviewed at least annually. For children under five, reviews may need to be more frequent. Reviews will be person-centred and will consider progress towards outcomes, changing needs, provision and preparation for the next stage. Statutory phase-transfer deadlines are led by the local authority; school will provide information and support transition in a timely way.

10. Early years and the school's nursery provision

Our early years provision, including provision for two-year-olds and nursery-aged children where applicable, follows the EYFS statutory framework and takes account of the SEND Code of Practice. Early identification is embedded in observation, assessment, key-person relationships and partnership with families.

Practitioners consider development from the child's individual starting point and recognise that development is not always linear. Appropriate early support is put in place promptly. Where needs are complex or persistent, the SENDCO works with families and relevant services to coordinate assessment and provision.

Transitions into school, between early years rooms/classes and into Reception are planned according to individual need and may include additional visits, visual supports, staff liaison, home/setting information and specialist advice.

11. Pupil and parent/carer participation

Ryhope Infant School Academy will involve children and their parents/carers in decisions about SEND provision. Communication will be accessible, respectful and free from unnecessary jargon. Meetings will focus on strengths as well as need, what is important to and for the child, agreed outcomes and the difference support is expected to make.

Pupil voice will be gathered in a developmentally appropriate way. This may include conversation, observation, photographs, symbols, communication systems, choice-making, one-page profiles and information from adults who know the child well.

Parents/carers will be informed when special educational provision is being made and will have regular opportunities to contribute to review. The school will signpost families to Sunderland's Local Offer and independent information, advice and support services where appropriate.

12. Roles and responsibilities

Governing body / academy trust

- ensures Ryhope Infant School Academy fulfils its statutory SEND and equality duties and uses its best endeavours to secure appropriate provision;
- ensures there is a qualified teacher designated as SENDCO and that the SENDCO has sufficient time, resources, authority and support to fulfil the role effectively;
- holds leaders to account for the quality, impact and inclusivity of SEND provision;
- ensures required SEND information and accessibility information are published and kept up to date;
- ensures arrangements are in place for complaints and for the admission and inclusion of pupils with a disability.

Headteacher

- has overall responsibility for the school's SEND provision and for ensuring the policy is implemented;
- works with the SENDCO and governors to establish an inclusive culture and strategic approach to SEND;
- ensures staff understand their responsibilities and receive appropriate professional development;
- ensures resources are deployed effectively and provision is monitored for impact.

SENDCO

- works with the headteacher and governing body to determine the strategic development of SEND policy and provision;
- has day-to-day responsibility for coordinating SEND provision and the graduated approach;
- provides professional guidance to colleagues and supports high-quality, inclusive teaching;
- liaises with parents/carers, early years providers, other schools and external professionals;
- coordinates provision for pupils with EHC plans and supports statutory review processes;
- advises on deployment of the school's delegated SEND resources;
- ensures SEND records are accurate and appropriately transferred;
- works with leaders on Equality Act duties, reasonable adjustments and accessibility.

The SENDCO holds the required statutory qualification, the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination (NASENCO).

Class teachers

- are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of every pupil they teach;
- identify barriers through assessment and knowledge of the child;
- provide quality first, adaptive teaching and agreed reasonable adjustments;
- plan, implement and review SEN Support with the pupil, parents/carers, SENDCO and support staff;
- direct and work effectively with teaching assistants while retaining responsibility for learning;
- maintain appropriate records and contribute to review and transition.

Teaching assistants and other support staff

Support staff work under the direction of teachers and relevant leaders to implement agreed provision, promote independence, provide feedback on learning and wellbeing, and contribute to consistent approaches. They do not replace the teacher's responsibility for the pupil.

13. Working with external agencies and the Local Offer

Ryhope Infant School Academy works collaboratively with relevant education, health and social care services. Depending on need and local arrangements, this may include educational psychology, speech

and language therapy, occupational or physiotherapy services, sensory services, health professionals, mental health services and specialist teaching or outreach services.

Ryhope Infant School Academy will share relevant information lawfully and proportionately and will seek consent where required. Safeguarding information may be shared without consent where lawful and necessary to protect a child.

The school's SEN Information Report explains how we implement this policy in practice and links families to Sunderland's Local Offer. It is reviewed at least annually and updated sooner where information changes.

14. Admissions, equality and reasonable adjustments

Ryhope Infant School Academy follows the School Admissions Code and its published admission arrangements. A child will not be refused admission simply because they have SEN or because they do not have an EHC plan. Where the school is named in an EHC plan following the statutory process, the child must be admitted, subject to the legal framework applying to EHC plans and academy admissions.

Under the Equality Act 2010, the school must not discriminate against disabled pupils and will make reasonable adjustments to avoid substantial disadvantage. The school also fulfils the accessibility planning duty in relation to curriculum access, the physical environment and accessible information.

Reasonable adjustments are anticipatory and individual. They may include changes to routines, environment, communication, teaching approaches, equipment, sensory access, participation arrangements or the way a policy is applied.

15. Safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and wellbeing

Children with SEND may face additional safeguarding barriers. Staff will remain alert to the possibility that indicators of abuse, neglect or exploitation may be attributed to a child's disability, behaviour or communication needs, and to the fact that some children may experience additional communication barriers when reporting concerns. The school follows Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

SEND is considered when the school responds to behaviour, attendance and emotional wellbeing. We will seek to understand whether unmet need, communication differences, sensory demands, anxiety, medical factors or environmental barriers are contributing to difficulty. This does not remove appropriate expectations or safeguarding responsibilities; it ensures responses are lawful, proportionate and informed.

Where appropriate, support may include personalised regulation strategies, sensory approaches, access to quieter or lower-arousal spaces, structured emotional literacy work, communication supports and collaboration with families and professionals. Any provision will be based on assessed need and reviewed for impact.

Ryhope Infant School Academy will consider whether reasonable adjustments or additional SEND support are required when applying behaviour and attendance procedures. Suspensions and exclusions are managed in accordance with current statutory guidance, with careful consideration of SEND, disability and equality duties.

16. Transition

Transition is planned proactively for pupils with SEND. This includes entry from home or early years settings, movement between classes or phases, transfer to junior/primary provision and any mid-year move.

Transition arrangements are personalised according to need and may include additional visits, visual information, social stories, transition books, meetings between staff, joint work with families, transfer of support plans and specialist advice.

For Year 2 pupils moving to the linked junior school on the same site, school will work closely with receiving staff. Where this reflects current school practice, arrangements may include planned transition visits, opportunities to learn with the new teacher, a transition morning including lunch, and detailed handover meetings between relevant teachers and senior leaders.

Relevant SEND records are transferred securely and promptly in line with data protection and safeguarding requirements. Where schools use the authorised safeguarding/recording system CPOMS, relevant information will be made available to the receiving school in accordance with local procedures, permissions and information-governance arrangements. For unexpected or mid-year transfers, we will make timely contact with the receiving setting to minimise disruption.

17. Funding and deployment of resources

Ryhope Infant School Academy uses its delegated resources, including its notional SEND budget and any additional high-needs/top-up funding allocated by the local authority, to meet identified needs. Funding decisions are based on provision required and impact rather than diagnosis alone.

Where a personal budget forms part of an EHC plan, school will work with the local authority and family in accordance with statutory requirements. The existence of a personal budget does not remove the school's responsibility to make the provision for which it is responsible.

18. Data, records and confidentiality

Ryhope Infant School Academy maintains accurate, proportionate and up-to-date SEND records. These may include the SEN register, one-page profiles, support plans, provision records, assessment information, professional reports, review records, EHC plan documentation and transition information.

Information is handled in accordance with UK data protection law, safeguarding requirements and the school's privacy notices and records-management procedures. Information is shared on a need-to-know basis and only where there is a lawful basis. Data protection law does not prevent appropriate information-sharing to safeguard a child.

EHC plans and associated information are shared only where lawful and necessary, including with those who need the information to fulfil education, safeguarding, statutory review, tribunal or other legal functions.

19. Complaints and disagreement resolution

Parents/carers are encouraged to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity with the class teacher and/or SENDCO so that issues can be resolved collaboratively. Where a concern is not resolved, the school's published Complaints Procedure applies.

School will signpost families to relevant local SEND information, advice and support, disagreement-resolution or mediation services where appropriate. Rights of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) relate to specified local-authority decisions and disability discrimination matters; the school will cooperate with lawful requests connected with tribunal proceedings.

20. Monitoring, evaluation and policy review

Leaders and governors monitor the effectiveness of SEND provision through a range of evidence. This may include pupil progress and developmental outcomes, attendance and participation, pupil and parent voice, quality of teaching, implementation of support plans, provision mapping, transition outcomes, staff development and the impact of external advice.

School evaluates provision by asking not only what support has been delivered, but what difference it has made to the child's learning, communication, independence, participation, wellbeing and preparation for the next stage.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, local arrangements or school provision. The SEN Information Report will be reviewed annually and updated during the year when required.

Key statutory and guidance references

- Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care: SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (updated September 2024).
- Children and Families Act 2014.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Department for Education: School Admissions Code 2021.
- Department for Education: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (in force from 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education: Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions.
- Department for Education: current guidance on the mandatory qualification for SENDCOs.
- Department for Education: current online publication requirements for schools/academy trusts, as applicable.
- Sunderland City Council: Local Offer and current local SEND guidance.