
Belfast Royal Academy

per vias sapientiae



Special Educational Needs Policy 2026-27

Title	Special Educational Needs Policy
Summary	Guidance for all stakeholders regarding: definitions of Special Educational Needs; measures the School has in place to meet the educational needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs; roles and responsibilities of governors and School staff.
Purpose	To ensure an effective response to meeting the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs.
Operational Date	August 2026
Next Review Date	August 2027
Author	Vice Principal and Learning Support Coordinator (LSC)
To be posted on School website	Yes
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Special Educational Needs are circumstances which reduce a pupil's access to learning whether through physical, emotional, learning or behavioural difficulties. The purpose of this policy is to ensure an effective response by the School in providing support and in promoting inclusion for pupils with Special Educational Needs. It should be viewed in the context of the School's wider Pastoral Care Policy.

We recognise that some pupils during their school career may have special educational needs and/or a disability. In the interests of these children, we will endeavour to make every reasonable arrangement to provide for their individual needs. A graduated response embeds a child-centred ethos, ensuring resources and expertise are matched to individual needs when and where they are needed most.

This policy is informed by current SEN legislation including the Education (Northern Ireland) Order (1996), the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO) (2005), and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (NI) 2016. It reflects current guidance from the Department of Education and the Education Authority.

Definitions

A child has Special Educational Needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A child has a learning difficulty if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or
- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities generally provided.

Special Educational Provision means educational provision which is additional to, or different from, that made generally for children of their age.

Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Aims

1. To identify pupils with Special Educational Needs/disability as early and accurately as possible using a variety of means and in consultation with appropriate personnel.
2. To follow the procedures and stages laid down by the Code of Practice (see below) on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs as required by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland and to implement current Department of Education for Northern Ireland Guidance.
3. To ensure that all pupils with S.E.N./disability feel valued
4. To ensure full entitlement and access for pupils with Special Educational Needs to high quality education within a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum.
5. To offer curricular, pastoral and extra-curricular opportunities that allow pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills so ensuring progress, promoting success and self-confidence.
6. To offer a broad curriculum which will promote intellectual, emotional, social and physical progress in order that pupils can develop as valuable members of society both now and in the future.

7. To encourage parental partnerships in all aspects of S.E.N. provision for their child.
8. To consider the views of the child/young person when planning and implementing S.E.N. provision. When considering the wishes of the child, his/her age and understanding should be taken into account.
9. To strive for close co-operation between all services and agencies concerned in order to achieve an effective multi-disciplinary approach to meeting Special Educational Needs.
10. To support the child/young person in participating in making decisions in all aspects of their learning.
11. To educate pupils with Special Educational Needs, wherever possible, alongside their peers.
12. To maintain a system of assessment, planning, recording, action and review to cater for the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs. This may require the drawing up of Individual Education Plans (I.E.P.s)/ Personalised Learning Plans (P.L.P.s).
13. To develop a recording system so that each pupil's performance can be monitored and reviewed appropriately.
14. To create a caring and supportive environment in which pupils can contribute to the planned provision in relation to their individual learning needs.
15. To encourage all pupils with Special Educational Needs to maintain interest in their education, to have a positive self-image and to develop his/her full potential.
16. To encourage a range of teaching strategies that accommodates different learning styles and promotes effective learning.
17. To provide regular training opportunities for all staff to develop their expertise in supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs.
18. To meet the needs of all pupils who have S.E.N. by offering appropriate forms of educational provision and the most efficient use of available resources, recognising there is a continuum of needs and a continuum of provision.
19. To promote collaboration amongst teachers in the implementation of the S.E.N. policy to meet the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs. This includes contributing to the outcomes set within I.E.P.s. (P.L.P.s).
20. To liaise closely with the school's Careers Department and outside agencies to ensure pupils with Special Educational Needs make a smooth transition to further/higher education or employment.
21. To work closely with the Education Authority services and other outside agencies as appropriate to support each pupil with Special Educational Needs.

Graduated Response Framework

The Graduated Response Framework (GRF) is a structured approach guiding schools in Northern Ireland to identify and support children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The School will use the Graduated Response Framework to identify and support children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

In line with the guidance, children/young people and their families will be involved at each stage of the graduated response journey. Listening and responding to their views through open communication between home and school is central to this process. If a child/young person has been identified as having a Special Educational Need, the graduated response will be documented through a Personal Learning Plan or Individual Education Plan.

The Framework outlines a six-part continuous cycle process to identify, plan, action, monitor, evaluate and review in response to the progress the child/young person makes with their learning. This is referred to as the IPAMER cycle. An overview of this cycle has been provided by the Education Authority:

Six Part IPAMER cycle

1. Identify

When a child/young person is experiencing difficulties with learning, the teacher will assess their needs, drawing on observations, professional judgement, formal and informal testing, and their experience of the pupil. This will help the teacher identify the child or young person's priority need(s).

2. Plan

All teachers and support staff who work with a child or young person should be made aware of their needs. Planning should include the support needed to help them make progress.

3. Action

Actions which include high quality teaching and/or planned provision should be implemented to support the child or young person in making progress.

4. Monitor

Within an agreed timeframe, actions and support need to be monitored closely, to establish if effective progress is being made. Schools should use evidence, observations, data for example to assist with monitoring.

5. Evaluate

School staff will analyse the impact of the actions/provision put in place for the child or young person. They will evaluate the progress they have made, examine improvement, and consider further areas to be addressed.

6. Review

School staff should review, refine, and revise their decision about the support required as they gain more of an understanding of the child or young person's needs. Review decisions should be made in consultation with the child or young person and their parents.

The IPALMER provides the day-to-day steps through which the graduated response is delivered. Each stage in the IPAMER cycle translates the strategic goals of the Graduated Response Framework into tasks and decisions within schools.

Stages of SEND support

Sometimes children and young people's needs can be met by the School (whole school provision). For example, the School can make reasonable adjustments such as adapting their teaching methods to help with inclusion.

Some children/young people may have a significantly greater difficulty in learning which calls for enhanced special educational support. In this instance they will be placed on the School's S.E.N. register. Placement on the S.E.N. Register is based on evidence that a pupil requires provision that is additional to or different from that normally available through differentiated classroom practice.

The School records Special Educational Needs in line with Department of Education guidance across the following broad areas of need:

- Cognition and Learning
- Social, Emotional and Behavioural Wellbeing
- Speech, Language and Communication
- Sensory
- Physical

The School also maintains a Medical Register. Pupils with medical conditions may or may not have Special Educational Needs. A pupil may be recorded on both the S.E.N. Register and the Medical Register where appropriate.

There are three stages of special educational provision:

Stage One: school-delivered special educational provision.

Stage Two: school- delivered provision plus external provision from EA and or Health Trusts

Stage Three: the child has a statement of Special Educational Needs and is receiving support as set out in their statement.

The special educational support for each child/young person will be outlined by using the Personal Learning Plan (PLP) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The School will continue to monitor the child or young person's progress and using the Graduated Response Framework, the child or young person may move up and down these stages (of the SEN Code of Practice) depending on their progress or support needs.

Code of Practice

The Code of Practice (1998), as supplemented in 2005, outlines a three-stage approach which operates within the developing S.E.N. and Inclusion Framework:

Stage 1: School delivered Special Education Provision

At this stage of the Code of Practice, special educational provision is made by the School. The child or young person will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Personal Learning Plan (PLP). Responsibility for teaching and learning lies with the School. The School will put in place reasonable adjustments and **additional** strategies and approaches aimed at meeting and addressing the child's SEN. The majority of children and young people with SEN will have their educational needs met through this stage of provision.

Will my child stay at Stage 1 of the Code? Often a child makes progress in response to school delivered special educational provision at Stage 1. If this is the case, the child may be removed from the SEN Register. If a child does not make adequate progress and continues to experience significant difficulties despite the school fully implementing a wide range of provision at Stage 1, the setting may consider seeking external support or advice from the Education Authority or Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT).

Stage 2: School delivered Special Education Provision plus External Provision

External provision may include support from Education Authority services, including the Local Impact Team (LIT), accessed through a Request for Involvement (RFI).

At this stage of the Code of Practice, special educational provision is made by the School plus external provision e.g. the EA or an HSCT. The child or young person will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Personal Learning Plan (PLP). Responsibility for teaching and learning lies with the School plus external provision from the EA. The School will put in place Reasonable adjustments, additional strategies and approaches plus resources, advice, guidance, support and training provided through the EA SEN support services to address the child's SEN. A smaller number of children and young people will need this provision.

Will my child stay at Stage 2 of the Code? A child will be recorded at Stage 2 whilst additional support is being provided from either EA or a HSCT, or whilst a request for Statutory Assessment is being made.

If a child or young person makes adequate progress following external support at Stage 2, they may return to Stage 1 and continue to be provided with the school delivered special educational provision. However, if they do not make suitable progress, despite the external support, they may be referred for consideration of a statutory assessment of their educational needs.

If the EA agree to carry out a statutory assessment and then decide to issue a Statement, the child or young person will then move to Stage 3 of the Code.

If the EA does not agree to carry out a statutory assessment, the child or young person may remain at Stage 2 if receiving additional support from EA SEND Services or be placed at Stage 1 and continue to receive school-based SEN Provision.

Stage 3: Statement of Special Educational Needs

At this stage of the Code of Practice, special educational provision is made by the school, EA plus any relevant treatment or service identified by a HSCT. The child or young person will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Personal Learning Plan (PLP). The responsibility lies with the school and the EA – with input from HSCT where relevant. The School will put in place reasonable adjustments, school delivered special educational provision plus EA provision as set out in a Statement. A smaller number of children and young people will need this provision.

Will my child stay at Stage 3 of the Code? Article 19 of the Education Order 1996 requires all statements to be reviewed annually. This is to ensure that the needs of the child are still being met and that the placement and provision remains appropriate. The recommendations in each Annual Review will determine whether or not Stage 3 is appropriate for the current needs of the child.

Admissions

The admission arrangements with respect to the majority of pupils with Special Educational Needs must be consistent with the school's general arrangements for all other pupils.

Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs are placed in schools at the request of Education Authority NI. When seeking to place a pupil with a Statement, Education Authority NI will take into account the wishes of the child's parents and the provision of efficient education for other children in the class or school and the efficient use of resources to determine the suitability of the placement.

This arrangement is in line with SENDO legislation.

Transition

The School provides structured support at key transition points, including liaison with feeder primary schools and guidance for post-16 education, training and employment pathways.

Identification and Assessment of SEN

Identification of need will take place through a variety of means:

- information from parents and/or primary school;
- concerns expressed by class teachers or Heads of Year;
- the use of standardised/ diagnostic assessments as deemed necessary;
- the use of whole school data systems;
- assessment by specialist personnel where required.

Provision

Provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs will most often be within the normal classroom situation. Class teachers will be made aware of relevant needs, and advice will be given about appropriate strategies.

In the case of specific learning difficulties, pupils may receive some specialist teaching in small withdrawal groups, particularly in the junior years.

Facilities

The School had an accessibility plan carried out by a firm of architects some years ago. Subsequent to this, the School put in place an implementation plan.

Lifts have been installed in the Crombie, Bruce, Jackson, Darbyshire and Jackson Buildings and an external ramped access has been constructed to cover the Louis Lord and Pollin Buildings. All buildings in the School site are now accessible to people with disabilities. Accessible toilets are available in the Crombie, Jackson and the Technology Buildings. Changing facilities in both the Sports Hall and Swimming Pool have been converted to cater for wheelchair access, and a specially adapted chair allows access to the swimming pool for pupils with mobility difficulties.

As part of a major capital project, a Learning Support Suite has been created, specifically for pupils with special educational needs. This incorporates a Resource Room, with study carrels, offices for interviews and one to one sessions with pupils, as well as a Classroom area and locker provision for pupils and Classroom Assistants. This has significantly improved facilities for pupils with Special Educational needs within the school.

Arrangements for Co-ordinating Special Educational Needs Provision

Special Educational Needs provision is the overall responsibility of the Board of Governors and the Principal of the school. However, in order to facilitate the day-to-day running of the provision, the Board of Governors have delegated responsibility for pupils with Special Educational Needs to the Learning Support Coordinator (LSC), in consultation with the Vice Principal.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following section highlights the key roles and responsibilities of all those involved in SEN provision:

Board of Governors

The role of the Board of Governors of a mainstream school is to exercise its functions in relation to the school with a view to ensuring that provision is made for registered pupils with special educational needs.

The School has appointed a S.E.N. Governor who monitors the School's provision for children with Special Educational Needs.

In accordance with Chapter 12 of *Every School a Good School* (DENI, 2010), the *SEN Resource File* (DENI, 2011), and the legislative framework of the *Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016*, the Board of Governors holds a statutory duty to ensure appropriate provision, inclusion, and support for all pupils with special educational needs.

To fulfil these legal obligations, the Board of Governors will actively undertake the following responsibilities:

- appoint a Learning Support Coordinator;
- ensure the Learning Support Coordinator receives ongoing training and has sufficient time to conduct the role effectively;
- ensure every pupil with S.E.N. has a Personalised Learning Plan;
- promote inclusion throughout the School;
- ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to notify the Education Authority if a child or the Classroom Assistant is/will be absent for 4 or more weeks and to record the return date where applicable;
- take account of the provisions in the DE Code of Practice on identifying and assessing special educational needs;
- use their best efforts to provide for pupils identified with SEN and that parents are notified of their child's special needs;
- maintain and operate a policy on SEN;
- ensure that where a registered pupil has special educational needs, those needs are made known to all who are likely to teach them;
- check that the teachers in the school know the importance of identifying those registered pupils with SEN and of providing appropriate teaching;
- allocate funding for special educational needs and disability;
- prepare and take forward a written accessibility plan.

The Principal

According to current Department of Education statutory guidance and the Code of Practice, the principal, should:

- keep the Board of Governors informed about S.E.N. issues;
- provide strategic leadership for S.E.N. ensuring an inclusive, ambitious whole school approach;
- promote collaboration and continued professional development for all staff;
- work in close partnership with the Learning Support Coordinator

- ensure the Learning Support Coordinator is supported to carry out the role effectively;
- oversee implementation of the School's S.E.N. policy;
- monitor and ensure the quality of teaching and learning for pupils with S.E.N. provision;
- maintain clear, timely communication with parents keeping them engaged;
- liaise with parents and external agencies as required;
- delegate and monitor the SEN budget;
- ensure the senior leadership team (SLT) are actively involved in the management of SEN within the School and that consistency of practice is secured, contributing to the realisation of the school development plan; and
- provide a secure facility for the storage of records relating to special educational needs.

The Learning Support Coordinator - LSC

The Learning Support Coordinator will:

- be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school's Special Educational Needs policy;
- respond to requests for advice from other staff;
- co-ordinate provision, ensuring early identification and timely intervention for pupils with Special Educational Needs;
- maintain the school's S.E.N. register and records on pupils with Special Educational Needs;
- conduct Annual Reviews for statemented pupils;
- lead the drawing up, monitoring and evaluation of IEPs/PLPs;
- work in partnership with parents/carers of children with Special Educational Needs;
- liaise with external agencies and the Education Authority;
- promote pupil voice;
- monitor the S.E.N. in-service training requirements of staff, and contribute as appropriate to their training;
- strategically allocate and oversee the deployment of Adult Assistants and co-ordinate their daily activities;
- develop and manage appropriate resources.

Assistant Learning Support Coordinator

The Assistant Learning Support Coordinator will:

- ensure IEPs/PLPs are regularly monitored, reviewed and evaluated;
- ensure the needs of individual pupils are appropriately identified;
- ensure external and internal provision is strategic, measured and routinely evaluated;
- support the LSC in respect of liaising with class teachers as well as parents and other relevant external agencies;
- support the LSC in the management and implementation of appropriate access arrangements, in line with relevant guidance;
- collate and monitor data.

Class Teacher and/or Class Tutor

The Class Teacher / Class Tutor should:

- be aware of current legislation;
- keep up to date with information on the S.E.N. Register;
- gather supporting information through observation and assessment;
- adapt teaching and use evidence-based strategies;

- develop and promote an inclusive classroom;
- contribute to the development and review PLPs in collaboration with the LSC;
- implement PLP outcomes within daily teaching and monitor pupil progress;
- work closely with their Subject Leader to assist the LSC in early identification and timely intervention for pupils with Special Educational Needs;
- support and direct adult assistants as part of the learning team.

Head of Year

The Head of Year should:

- be aware of current legislation;
- keep up to date with the S.E.N. Register;
- liaise with other staff regarding pupils who are experiencing difficulty;
- contribute to the development and review PLPs in collaboration with the LSC;
- work closely with Learning Support Coordinator (LSC);
- update records as appropriate.

Subject Leader

The Subject Leader should:

- be aware of current legislation;
- keep up to date with the S.E.N. Register;
- ensure new members of department are familiar with the S.E.N. Policy;
- ensure that practice and procedures within the department promote learning and teaching which is relevant and accessible to all pupils;
- support class teachers to enable them to provide an appropriate and differentiated curriculum;
- ensure appropriate resources are available;
- work closely with Learning Support Coordinator (LSC);
- discuss issues with class teachers through departmental meetings and forward minutes to LSC when appropriate.

SEN Support Staff/ Additional Adult Assistants

SEN Support Staff/ Additional Adult Assistants should:

- work under the direction of the LSC and class teacher*;
- be given clear guidance on their specific role in supporting named children;
- provide targeted, structured support to individual pupils or groups promoting independence and access to learning;
- provide practical support and guidance for those in their care;
- support inclusion helping pupils engage with peers and participate fully in school life;
- maintain confidentiality and uphold safeguarding and professional standards;
- keep records and attend meetings;
- share good practice.

* SEN Support Staff/ Additional Adult Assistants should support the work of the class teacher by:

- carrying out teacher planned activities/work on **outcomes**;
- implementing targeted programmes of work e.g. speech and language/ OT/physio/sensory;

- organising and maintaining resources;
- reinforcing class rules;
- assisting with the supervision of the class;
- monitoring and recording information on pupil progress.
- assisting with differentiated activities reinforcing learning and providing feedback to the teacher
- contributing observational information that helps inform teacher assessment and PLP reviews

Pupil views

In school, as far as reasonably practicable, we seek and have regard to the child's/ young person's views about their strengths, learning difficulties and education, taking into account their age and maturity. We seek and listen to their views about how they learn effectively and then focus on the strategies that work for them.

Key decisions for a particular pupil might include:

- contributing to their own assessment, provision, and progress;
- working towards achieving agreed outcomes;
- contributing to the review of IEP/PLPs, Annual Reviews, and the Transition process;
- involving and supporting the pupils to participate in making decisions about matters affecting them.

Pupils are supported to participate in decision-making about their learning in line with their age and understanding.

Parent/person with parental responsibility

It is the School's responsibility to inform parents when staff are considering placing the pupil's name on the S.E.N. register or moving the child between stages. It is essential that parents inform the relevant school staff of any significant needs their child may possess. They should do this as early as possible. For example, essential information may need to be made available by a parent upon a child's entry to the school.

Parents should be invited as necessary to:

- meet with staff to discuss their child's needs;
- attend review meetings;
- inform staff of changes in circumstances;
- support **outcomes** on IEPs/PLPs.

The School is committed to working in partnership with parents in a spirit of openness, transparency and shared responsibility.

Teachers, pastoral staff, LSC and other school staff all have a significant role in developing positive and constructive relationships with parents and pupils. We encourage this participation and value its contribution.

Access Arrangements for Examinations

“Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working.” (Joint Council for Qualifications)

It is JCQ’s advice that access arrangements/reasonable adjustments should be processed at the start of the examination course.

The Learning Support Coordinator leads the process for access arrangements in collaboration with teaching staff, The Assistant Learning Support Coordinator and the Examinations Officer. Further information relating to Access Arrangements is contained in the External Examinations Policy.

Annual Report

The Board of Governors report annually on all aspects of S.E.N. provision in school. The S.E.N. section in the Annual Report contains information on the number of statemented pupils; pupils that received provision from the Education Authority Local Impact Team (LIT), EA Pupil Support Services or Health and Social Care Trust and those that accessed school-delivered special educational provision.

Our policy will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect changes in legislation and practice. The views of staff, parents, pupils, governors and external agencies may be sought as part of the consultation process.