



Special Educational Needs Policy

For the purposes of this policy document the term SEN refers to those pupils in our school who have special educational needs and/or a disability which affects their learning. Our policy takes account of the following legislation and documentation:

Legislation:

- [The Education \(NI\) Order 1996](#)
- [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(NI\) Order 2005](#)
- [The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act \(NI\) 2016](#)

Documentation:

- [Department of Education Northern Ireland \(1998\) Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. Bangor: DENI \(PDF, 644KB\)](#)
- [Department of Education Northern Ireland \(2005\) Supplement to the Code of Practice. Bangor: DENI \(PDF, 801KB\)](#)
- [Equality Commission, Northern Ireland \(2006\) Disability Discrimination Code of Practice for Schools \(SENDO\). \(PDF, 761 KB\)](#)
- [Department of Education Northern Ireland \(2009\) *Every School a Good School – a policy for school improvement*, Bangor: DENI. \(PDF, 706KB\)](#)

Rationale

Shaftesbury Nursery School staff are committed to providing equal access for all our pupils to a broad and balanced educational experience based on the Northern Ireland Curriculum. 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. 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. It ensures that learners and their families are actively involved at every stage, with decisions documented through a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) or Individual Education Plan (IEP). The six-part IPAMER cycle – Identify, Plan, Action, Monitor, Evaluate, Review - provides the day-to-day steps through which the graduated response is delivered. Each stage in IPAMER cycle translates the strategic goals of the Graduated Response Framework into concrete tasks and decisions within schools.

The legislation that currently governs practice regarding children and young people (C&YP) with special educational needs (SEN) is the Education Order (1996). The current Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of SEN provides guidance on how the legislation is to be delivered in schools and was published in 1998.

SEND0 (2005) increased the rights of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities to be educated in mainstream schools and aimed to ensure that children with disabilities were not disadvantaged compared to their peers in school. This included the school being proactive in areas such as ensuring that the school is prepared with an adapted environment and differentiated curricula for all children who may wish to attend, including those with SEN/Disabilities.

The Supplement to the CoP was published in 2005 and updated parts of the 1998 CoP to reflect the changes following SEND0 (2005).

The most recent legislation, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (NI) 2016, strengthens and builds upon the duties contained within the Education Order (NI) 1996 and SEND0 (NI) 2005. It places new duties on the school's Board of Governors, the Education Authority and Health and Social Care Trusts. It provides new rights for parents and children over compulsory school age. It is one element of the new SEN

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and Inclusion Framework which includes new SEN Regulations and a new statutory Code of Practice which at the time of issue of this document is awaiting ministerial approval.

NB: In the interim, schools have been advised that they must continue to adhere to all aspects of the Code of Practice (1998) and the Supplement to the Code of Practice (2005), except for recording children under the new three stages of the Code of Practice.

Definitions

For all involved in a child's education it is important that there is a clear understanding of the terms 'special educational needs,' 'learning difficulty' and 'special educational provision, as defined in Article 3 of the 1996 Order.

Special Educational Needs

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

Learning Difficulty

A child has a learning difficulty if:

- (a) they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than **the majority of** children of the same age;
- (b) they have a disability which either prevents or hinders them making use of everyday educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in ordinary schools; or
- (c) they have not attained the lower limit of compulsory school age and is or would be if special educational provision were not made, likely to fall within (a) or (b) when of compulsory school age.

Special Educational Provision

Special educational provision (SpEP) is educational provision, which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in ordinary schools.

Disability

The following definition of disability is taken from the Disability Discrimination Act (1995):

A disability is when someone has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities. (Paragraph 2.3)

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Key Principles of Inclusion

The Disability Discrimination Code of Practice for Schools (ECNI, 2006), states: “...all pupils have a right to the same opportunities in the whole of their educational life.”

All schools should have an inclusive ethos and actively seek to promote the inclusion of every child. Schools should approach inclusion as an integral part of all school policies including the school’s SEN policy, school development plan, the school’s accessibility plan and policies relating to e.g., discipline, bullying and pastoral care.

SEN and Medical Categories

The following is the list of the five overarching SEN categories and sub-categories taken from: [Department of Education Northern Ireland \(2019\) Recording SEN and Medical Categories – Guidance for Schools, Bangor: DENI](#)).

- 1. Cognition and Learning (CL) – language, literacy, mathematics, numeracy**
 - a) Dyslexia (DYL) or Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) - language/literacy
 - b) Dyscalculia (DYC) or Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) - mathematics/numeracy
 - c) Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)
 - d) Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)
 - e) Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)

- 2. Social, Behavioural, Emotional and Well-being (SBEW)**
 - a) Social and Behavioural Difficulties (SBD)
 - b) Emotional and Well-being Difficulties (EWD)
 - b) Severe Challenging Behaviour associated with SLD or PMLD (SCB)

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3. Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

- a) Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)
- b) Language Disorder associated with a differentiating/ biomedical condition (LD)
- c) Communication and Social Interaction Difficulties (CSID)

4. Sensory (SE)

- a) Blind (BD)
- b) Partially Sighted (PS)
- c) Severe/Profound Hearing Impairment (SPHI)
- d) Mild or Moderate Hearing Impairment (MMHI)
- e) Multi-sensory Impairment (MSI)

5. Physical Need (PN)

- a) Physical (P)

Children with a medical condition

Children who have an identified medical condition will be recorded on the school's medical register. Those who do not require special educational provision will be recorded on the medical register only and will not be placed on the SEN register.

A pupil with a medical diagnosis or disability may or may not have a SEN but what is key is "does the pupil have a requirement for special educational provision to access the curriculum."

A pupil can be recorded on both the SEN register and medical register if they have both a medical need and require special educational provision to be made for them.

The medical register is the responsibility of the Principal, Stephanie McAllister.

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The following is the list of the key medical diagnoses as commonly identified and agreed by the Department of Health which occur within the school population taken from [Department of Education Northern Ireland \(2019\) Recording SEN and Medical Categories – Guidance for Schools, Bangor: DENI.](#)

- Epilepsy
- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Anaphylaxis
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Dyspraxia/ Development Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)
- Developmental Language Disorder (Medical) (DLD)
- Global Developmental Delay
- Down Syndrome
- Complex Healthcare Needs
- Anxiety Disorder (includes social anxiety, phobia, school refusal, obsessive compulsive disorder)
- Depression
- Eating Disorder
- Psychosis
- Other Medical Disorder
- Cerebral Palsy
- Spina Bifida – with Hydrocephalus
- Spina Bifida – without Hydrocephalus
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Acquired Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- Physical Disability
- Other Medical Condition/ Syndrome

Policy Aims

1. To identify pupils with SEN/disability as early as possible using a variety of measures and in consultation with appropriate personnel.
2. To ensure full entitlement and access for pupils with SEN/disability to high quality education within a broad, balanced, relevant, and differentiated curriculum.
3. To ensure that all pupils with SEN/disability feel valued.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. To encourage parental partnerships in all aspects of SEN provision.
7. To create a caring and supportive environment in which pupils can express their views and participate in their learning considering their age and capacity.
8. To work closely with EA services and other outside agencies as appropriate to support pupils using a multi-disciplinary approach to meet SEN.
9. To educate pupils with SEN, wherever possible, alongside their peers.
10. To monitor and review each individual pupil's progress appropriately.
11. To encourage and/or maintain the interest of pupils with SEN in their education.
12. To encourage a range of teaching strategies that accommodate different learning styles and promote effective learning.
13. To meet the needs of all pupils who have SEN 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.
14. To promote collaboration amongst staff in the implementation of the SEN policy.

Arrangements for Co-ordinating SEN Provision

Although meeting the needs of pupils with SEN is a whole school issue, the overall responsibility for managing SEN provision resides with the Board of Governors and the principal of the school. However, to facilitate the day-to-day running of the special educational provision the Board of Governors has delegated responsibility for co-ordinating the provision for pupils with special educational needs to the Principal, Stephanie Gillespie (Learning Support Co-ordinator/SENCo).

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 function 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 SEN Governor to monitor the school's provision for children with special educational needs.

Chapter 12 of the document '*Every School a Good School*' (DENI, 2010) relates specifically to the role of the governor in supporting pupils with special educational needs. Based on this information, The *SEN Resource File* (DENI, 2011) outlines that the Board of Governors has a statutory duty to:

- take account of the provisions in the DE Code of Practice for identifying and assessing special educational needs.
- use their best efforts to provide for pupils identified with SEN
- ensure that parents are informed of their child's special educational needs and the provision that the school intends to make to address these.
- 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; and
- prepare and take forward a written accessibility plan.

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Principal

According to the Code of Practice (1998) the principal should:

- keep the Board of Governors informed about SEN issues.
- work in close partnership with the LSC.
- liaise with parents and external agencies as required.
- delegate and monitor the SEN budget.
- work with staff members to ensure consistency of practice and contribution of all staff to the realisation of the School Development Plan (SDP).
- provide a secure facility for the storage of records relating to special educational needs.

Learning Support Co-ordinator/SENCo

In all mainstream schools, a designated teacher who usually assumes the title of the Learning Support Co-ordinator (LSC) should be responsible for:

- the day-to-day operation of the school's special educational needs policy.
- responding to requests for advice from other teachers.
- coordinating provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- maintaining the school's SEN register and overseeing all the records on pupils with special educational needs.
- working in partnership with parents of children with special educational needs.
- establishing the SEN in-service training requirements of the staff, and contributing as appropriate to their training; and
- liaising with external agencies.

Class Teacher

The class teacher should:

- be aware of current legislation.
- keep up to date with information on the SEN Register.
- gather information through observation and assessment.
- develop an inclusive classroom.
- work closely with other staff to plan for learning and teaching.
- create, implement, monitor and review IEPs for the children in their class; and
- involve additional adult assistants as part of the learning team.

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SEN Support Staff/ Additional Adult Assistants

Support Staff/ Additional Adult Assistants should:

- work under the direction of the class teacher;
- be involved in planning;
- look for positives by talking to/observing the child;
- provide practical support;
- listen to the child/speak to staff on the child's behalf;
- explain boundaries and operate these consistently and fairly;
- keep records and attend meetings; and
- share good practice.

Pupil views

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

When seeking the views of the nursery child it is important to firstly consider the child's level of understanding and their ability to communicate, as this will help determine the best ways to capture their views. Eliciting the views of some children will be particularly challenging especially in the initial stages of their nursery school year and increased parental input may be needed to support this process.

Ways of seeking the child's views may include:

- observations of the child's preferences while at play;
- photographs; and
- use of questioning and recording answers.

Seeking the child's views and supporting them to participate in making decisions about their learning is good practice. The child's progress will be more effective when both they and, where appropriate, their parents are involved, and account is taken of their wishes, feelings, and perspectives.

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Parent/person with parental responsibility

At Shaftesbury Nursery School, we acknowledge that successful partnerships between parents, pupils and school play a key role in promoting a culture of co-operation, openness and transparency and have a crucial impact on the effectiveness of special educational provision. Seeking the views of the child also plays a key role in helping us understand individual needs.

The Principal/teacher/ 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.

It is the school's responsibility to inform parents when staff are considering placing the pupil's name on the SEN 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; and
- support targets on IEPs/PLPs.

Admissions

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

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO) (2005) legislation strengthened the right for children with a Statement to attend an ordinary school, unless it is against the wishes of parents or it is incompatible with the efficient education of others. Children who have special educational needs but do not have a statement, must, except in specific circumstances, be educated in an ordinary school (Article 3(1) SENDO, 2005).

Children with Statements of SEN are placed in the school at the request of the Education Authority (EA). When seeking to place a pupil with a Statement, the EA 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.

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Accessibility

Every grant-aided school and independent school is required to have a written accessibility plan which should be publicly available and accessible via the school's website. The focus in the school's accessibility plan is to:

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum. By way of example, this covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure, and cultural activities;
- improve the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services provided or offered by the school; and
- improve the delivery to disabled pupils of the information which is provided in writing to pupils who are not disabled. This should be completed within a reasonable time and take into account their disability and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.

At present:

- pupils with disabilities have equal access to areas of the school building;
- the school is accessible to wheelchair users;
- there are well-equipped facilities for personal care;
- Sensory room
- Specifically tailored Indoor and outdoor specialised play equipment
- access to a broad and balanced curriculum can be facilitated appropriate to age, ability, aptitude, and attainments.
- Drafting an interim accessibility plan (2025/26)

Annual Report

The Board of Governors reports annually on all aspects of SEN provision in school. The SEN section in the Annual Report contains information on: the number of statemented pupils; pupils that received provision from EA Pupil Support Services or Health and Social Care Trust; and those that accessed school-delivered special educational provision.

This report is made available on request.

Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs

It is vitally important that children with SEN are identified as early as possible and that an awareness of their possible difficulties is clearly communicated between all the professionals involved with their development.

(Code of Practice 1998, paragraph 2.14)

Children with SEN should be identified as early as possible and assessed as quickly as is consistent with thoroughness.

(Supplementary Guide of the Code of Practice paragraph 5.12 - page 44)

In Shaftesbury Nursery School, the following may be used to identify pupils' needs:

- information from transferring settings.
- parental contributions (*before a child starts and throughout his/her time in SNS*)
- teacher observations.
- language screeners.
- diagnostic assessments.
- individual education plans.
- care plans.
- personal education plans for children looked after.
- statements of special educational need.
- annual/transfer reviews.
- professional reports.
- pupil contributions.

The Management of Special Educational Needs

The Three Stages of Special Education Provision

In Shaftesbury Nursery School, we adhere to the three stages of the Code of Practice. These stages focus on the level of intensity of the special educational provision through a graduated response which is required for a child to make adequate progress commensurate with their abilities and improve their outcomes. Responsibility for pupils with SEN at each stage lies with the school, given the day-to-day role of the school in a pupil's teaching and learning, with increasing EA involvement when required. A summary of the three stages of special education provision is set out below:

Stage 1 includes:

- School delivered special educational provision (graduated response)
- A Personal Learning Plan (PLP) is required.
- The majority of special educational needs will be met at this stage.
- The responsibility lies with the school.
- Operates in mainstream schools and classes; and
- Reasonable adjustments and additional strategies and approaches are implemented, aimed at meeting, and addressing the child's SEN.

The PLP should contain the core information/evidence of the school's graduated response to inform a request for involvement (RFI), if considered necessary, for access to the EA Local SEND Impact team (LIT) for input at stage 2. The child will only move to Stage 2 once any external special educational provision is being implemented.

Stage 2 includes:

- School-delivered special educational provision plus external provision, for example, the EA or the HSC Trust;
- A PLP is required. A smaller number of children will need this provision.
- The responsibility lies with the school plus external provision from EA.
- Operates in mainstream schools and classes; and
- Reasonable adjustments, additional strategies and approaches are implemented (in line with a graduated response) plus resources, advice, guidance, support, and training provided through the EA SEN support services to address the child's SEN.

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In the event of a child not making progress, despite the external support from the EA, the child may require consideration for a statutory assessment. A new online form designed to guide the user through the process is used to make a request for statutory assessment. The PLP contains the core school information the EA will use to consider and if appropriate, make a statutory assessment.

The pupil will remain at Stage 2 when a request for a statutory assessment is being considered, is being made and, if appropriate until a Statement is made.

Stage 3 includes:

- Pupils with a statement of SEN.
- School and EA delivered special educational provision (in line with a graduated response) plus any relevant treatment or service identified by the HSC Trust.
- A PLP is required.
- A smaller number of children will need this provision.
- The responsibility lies with the school and the EA –with input from the HSC Trust where relevant.
- Operates in mainstream schools, LS **centres** attached to mainstream schools or special schools.
- Reasonable adjustments, the school delivered special educational provision are implemented plus EA provision as set out in the Statement. (Representative of a graduated response)

At Stage 3, the child has a statement and is receiving special educational provision (as set out in the Statement).

The pupil's PLP should be revised, to reflect the content of the statement (as it relates to the PLP including the SEN category (or categories); setting expected outcomes based on the objectives of the special educational provision and the nature and extent of the EA's provision including any relevant service and treatment the HSC Trust are to provide; and any additional school provision or modifications to the curriculum, as itemised in the statement; the pupil's PLP will be subject to regular monitoring, review and evaluation and will form the key basis of educational information to inform the annual/transfer review of the statement.

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Exceptional Cases

In most cases transition through the three-staged assessment process occurs in sequence. However, in exceptional circumstances, pupils may demonstrate such significant or unforeseen difficulties that with multi-professional and parental agreement a move to a higher stage of need is necessary immediately.

The Annual/Transfer Review

Article 19 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 requires that any child or young person who is the subject of a statement of special educational needs, whether attending a special or mainstream school, must be reviewed annually, to make sure that the needs of the child or young person are still being met and to consider the appropriateness of the placement. Annual/Transfer Reviews should be seen as part of the process of continuous monitoring of the child's progress. The Annual Review procedure is designed to:

- Gauge the child's progress towards meeting the objectives specified in the Statement;
- review the special provision made for the child, including placement; and
- consider the appropriateness of maintaining the statement of special educational needs.

The annual review is carried out by the school on behalf of the EA.

The Review will take place in school and is chaired by the principal (or another person as delegated by the principal).

Relevant forms and the EA's guidance for this process are available by contacting Statutory Assessment and Review Service (SARS) of the school's local EA office or they can be downloaded from the [EA website](#).

Record Keeping

The LSC keeps the following records in school:

- SEN Register.
- records of concern.
- Personal Learning Plans /reviews.
- statements/annual reviews/transition plans.
- assessments/observations.
- individual pupil files.
- record of liaison/meetings with staff from the Education Authority's SEN Support Services/Health and Social Care Trust
- minutes of meetings with parents; and
- support, advice, and training provided to staff.

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Monitoring the Progress of Pupils with Special Educational Needs

It is the responsibility of the LSC to ensure that the progress of pupils on the SEN register is monitored. This may be achieved by considering that:

- individual education plans are monitored and reviewed for quality, progression, and appropriateness through meeting with teachers on a regular basis.
- Evidence is collated to demonstrate whether the pupil is making progress; and
- information gathered is used in future planning for intervention and to inform movement throughout the stages of the Code of Practice.

Professional Development

The principal in consultation with the LSC oversees the professional development of all staff in their school. It is essential that all staff are kept up to date with SEN developments to provide effective teaching and support for pupils.

Following attendance at relevant internal or external education and training programmes, staff members should be encouraged to disseminate the information provided to build the capacity of their colleagues.

Working in partnership

In school we work with the EA Local Impact Team (LIT) , where appropriate, to receive training and guidance in a multi-disciplinary capacity to support the school and parents in meeting the needs of children with special educational and medical needs. Other examples of EA Services may include:

- Education Psychology Service
- Sensory Service
- Specialist Setting Support Team
- SEND Implementation and Advice Service
- Statutory Advice and Review Service (SARS)

Other Support Services (for example)

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- RISE NI
- Speech and Language therapist from Belfast Health Trust
- Infant Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (ICAMHS)
- Child Development Clinic (CDC)

Complaints

All complaints regarding SEN will be dealt with in line with school's existing complaints procedures.

If you have any queries in relation to the special educational needs of a child with a statement or who is currently being assessed for a statement of special educational needs, you can contact your local [EA Office](#). Please contact your SEN Link Officer in the first instance. Contact details should be on the EA documentation issued to you alongside your child's statement.

Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Service (DARS)

The [Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Service \(DARS\)](#) provides an independent, confidential forum to resolve or reduce the disagreement, in relation to special educational provision, between parents and school/Boards of Governors or the EA for pupils who are on the Code of Practice where previous attempts to do so have been unsuccessful.

Parents can contact the service which is provided by [Global Mediation](#).

Involvement with DARS will not affect the right to appeal to the Special Education Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST)

Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST)

The [Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal \(SENDIST\)](#) considers parents' right to appeal against the decisions made by the Education Authority about their child's special educational needs whenever an agreement cannot be reached.

This service also addresses claims of disability discrimination in school.

Monitoring and evaluating the SEN Policy

The SEN policy will be reviewed regularly. It will be amended as appropriate in light of changes in legislation or practice following targeted consultation with all staff members, parents, and external agencies. This policy will be brought to the Board of Governors for final approval.

Monitoring and evaluation

Policy: February 2025

Signed by Principal:

Signed by Chair of Governors:

Policy reviewed: November 2025