Ballycraigy Primary School

Social Communication Centre Operational Policy

Date	September 2025
Date ratified by governors	September 2025
Date of next review	September 2026

Purpose and Scope

This Operational Policy sets out the day-to-day procedures, responsibilities, and standards for the Social Communication Centres (SCC) at Ballycraigy Primary School—The Nest (P1–P4) and The Cove (P5–P7). It applies to all staff, pupils, parents/carers, volunteers, and visiting professionals engaged with SCC provision. The policy should be read alongside whole-school policies including Safeguarding & Child Protection, Behaviour, Intimate Care, Health & Safety, SEN, Data Protection, and the Northern Ireland Curriculum guidance.

Vision

Our school vision is to Nurture and Inspire Our Children so they achieve whilst at Ballycraigy and Beyond.

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Rationale and Aims

We aim to:

- Provide a nurturing, structured small-group placement for pupils with identified social communication needs, as determined by Education Authority (EA) processes.
- Deliver the Northern Ireland Curriculum in an accessible, differentiated, and multisensory manner.

- Embed inclusion: SCC pupils are valued members of the whole school community with access to integration opportunities.
- Promote moral, intellectual, social and personal development through caring, stimulating environments.

Organisation and Provision

- Our provisions are in the form of two classrooms within the main building.
- The Nest is along the lower corridor (aligned with Foundation Stage/KS1) and The Cove is located along the top corridor (aligned with KS2). Our two provisions are The Nest and the Cove. The Nest has pupils from P1–P4 and The Cove P5–P7.
- In line with Department of Education guidance, each SCC is capped at eight (8) pupils.
- Each SCC has 1 full-time teacher and 2 permanent classroom assistants. There may be additionality attached to specific children and this is reviewed annually.
- Each class is well-resourced and is placed within spacious rooms designed for maximum access and inclusion.

Governance, Roles and Responsibilities

SCCs are an integral part of Ballycraigy Primary School; all whole-school policies and procedures apply. Key roles:

Role	Key Operational Responsibilities
Principal	Oversees strategic leadership and policy development; approves staffing and pupil placement with Board of Governors (BOG); secures funding and resources; ensures compliance and quality assurance.
SCC Lead Teacher	Leads day-to-day SCC operations; ensures planning, record-keeping, and assessment cycles; coordinates annual reviews; liaises with external agencies; oversees SCC action plan; ensures adherence to school policies; supports staff development.
Class Teacher (SCC)	Manages classroom operations; delivers full NI Curriculum appropriately; completes baselines; writes and implements IEPs/PLPs; directs classroom assistants; leads parental communication and collaboration.

Classroom Assistants	Support and supervise learning under teacher direction; implement structured programmes; contribute to observations and record-keeping; participate in training relevant to SCC needs.
Designated Teacher (Safeguarding) – Mrs Little	Leads safeguarding; oversees child protection procedures; supports referrals and inter-agency liaison.
Deputy Designated Teacher (SCC Lead Safeguarding) – Mrs Fowler	First point of contact for SCC safeguarding concerns; supports staff to follow safeguarding procedures and documentation.
Link Governor with Board of Governors- Mr Dylan Agnew	Mr Agnew is the contact for the Special Provision classes. The SPIMs and progress within them are a standing item on the agenda.

Admissions and timetable

1. EA Placement Decision: Children placed into SCCs via EA procedures and school/BOG agreement. The children have a primary need of Social Communication. They will not have a learning need.
2. Pre-Admission Liaison: School seeks updates from previous setting. If possible visits are made to the previous setting or neutral location, such as park or library.
3. Parent/Carer Induction Meeting: Outline SCC procedures; gather pupil information; agree initial supports; share key policies.
4. Transition Materials: Provide tailored transition booklet/social story; plan familiarisation visits for pupil and family.
5. Resourcing and Training: Request any additional equipment or staff training prior to start date.
6. Staggered Start/Settling Period: Individualised schedule to observe and acclimatize to new environment.

Example of the Admission Schedule

Action	Completed (✓/Date/Initials)
EA placement letter received	
Parent/carer induction meeting held	
Previous setting records obtained	
Transition booklet/social story shared/ special book or passport	
Risk assessment completed, and Risk Reduction Plan	
Intimate care plan (if applicable) drafted with home	
IEP/PLP draft prepared	
Resources/training requested	
Start date confirmed and timetable issued, this may be reduced initially to allow pupils to settle	

Home/School Communication

- Daily contact via Class Dojo for updates and messaging, during the hours of 8:30am and 3:15pm. This aligns with the school's operational hours
- If something is needed to be shared out of hours then the responsibility lies with Mrs Fowler as Head of the SPIM or Mrs Wilson as principal
- The staff within the provisions organize weekly updates
- Positive messages home to rely successes are shared. This is especially important if a child travels to the setting on EA transport
- Formal Parent-Teacher Meeting in Term 1; Annual Review Meeting in Term 2
- Termly consultation on IEP/PLP targets and progress. These are written in consultation with pupils and parents
- Weekly updates via Class Dojo; whole-school communications via newsletters, social media, and school website
- Parents may request phone consultations outside teaching time; additional meetings by appointment

Daily Operations and Timetabling

- Structured Timetable: Short, focused teaching pockets through carousel working; multisensory, practical approaches (especially in The Nest).
- Visual Supports: Individual schedules and task sequences as needed. Other visuals may include first and then cards, transition cards or count down strips.
- Preparation for Integration: Teachers coordinate with base-class timetables to align interests/events and readiness.
- Breaks and Regulation: Planned movement/sensory breaks; access to calm spaces and regulation strategies are an important feature within timetables.
- Within Foundation Stage there is a strong focus on Activity Based Learning and regular outside time.
- Supervision: Staff allocate zones and duties to ensure safe transitions (classroom, playground, dining hall, swimming, trips).

Curriculum, Assessment and Record-Keeping

- Curriculum: The NI Curriculum is adapted to the pupil ability and need.
- All pupils have access to structured systematic phonics; multisensory learning; short sessions of structured play.
- Baseline Assessment: After a period of settling in, this is completed on entry and at start of each school year; updated termly.
- Setting Specific Assessments: Specific assessments may be completed such as the Welcom, Boxhall, PHAB 11, Numeracy Screeners. Within Abacus and Heineman there are check up tests to ensure mastery.
- In-the-moment and planned observations filed in pupil observation folders, within the Nest. These are linked to pupils' planned work.
- IEP/PLP: Targets agreed with parents; evaluated termly; updates recorded.
- Summative Reporting: Annual report issued at end of each school year.
- Evidence: Samples of work/assessments compiled termly and stored in class files; data maintained securely.

Term	Key Assessment Actions	
On Entry	Baseline assessment; risk assessment; initial IEP/PLP draft	Baseline profile; IEP/PLP v1
Term 1	Observation and formative assessment; Parent-Teacher meeting Assessment updated	Updated targets; meeting notes

Term 2	Annual Review; mid-year summative checks	Annual Review paperwork; progress summary
Term 3	IEP/PLP evaluation; end-of-year report	IEP/PLP evaluations; annual report to parents

Integration

- Social integration with peers is supported and encouraged. This can take place in playground, assembly, dining hall, swimming lessons and school trips as appropriate.
- These are risk assessed and supported by staff. Close liaison takes place between the SCC staff and the base teachers. Pupils may attend for various session such as whole-class, small-group, and individual activities aligned with pupil readiness and interests.
- Trained role models (typically P7) support younger SCC pupils to develop social skills.
- Reverse integration is when small groups of children attend the Nest or the Cove. Mainstream pupils join The Nest/The Cove for activity-based learning or Friday Clubs which proves beneficial.

Planning for Integration Checklist

- Identify target activities/events for week
- Confirm readiness indicators for pupils
- Arrange buddies/peer supports
- Brief mainstream staff on needs and strategies
- Prepare social stories/visuals
- Record outcomes and next steps

Example of a Daily Class Set Up Check List

- Visual schedules prepared and personalised
- IEP/PLP targets accessible for staff
- Sensory resources available and checked
- Safety check of environment completed
- Timetable posted and shared with assistants
- Communication devices/cards charged and ready
- Regulation spaces prepared

Transport

Transport for some pupils is provided by EA transport. This is usually a taxis. The taxis has an escort and the risk assessment and organization of the transport is completed by the EA.

Promoting Positive Behaviour

The SCCs follow Ballycraigy Primary's whole school Promoting Positive Behavour Policy with an emphasis on positive, proactive strategies.

Our Behaviour Policy is based on the Five Pillars of Pivotal practice from 'When The Adults Change, Everything Changes' (Paul Dix, 2017)

- Consistent & Calm Adult Behaviour
- Relentless Routines
- First Attention for Best Conduct
- Scripting Difficult Conversations
- Restorative Follow Up

- Positive reinforcement is used to catch children being good. This includes; praise, encouragement, clear routines, visual supports. Within both classes the communication, self-regulation, social problem-solving.
- Risk Reduction Plans are developed for pupils who present with behaviours of concern. These are put in place for those who score more than fifteen on a risk assessment. For those with a lower score, a clam plan or SBEW plan is an alternative.
- All staff are trained in nurturing and Solihull approaches. They aim to provide a calm, non-confrontational space, where relationships are key.
- All significant incidents documented and reviewed; parents informed as appropriate.

Safe handling and Use of Reasonable Force

- Within the SCC we follow 2022 DE guidance and school procedures and policy; used only when necessary and proportionate to prevent harm to themselves and others, or property.
- Staff will use agreed de-escalation strategies; these may be individual to each pupil and could be humour, distraction or tracking.
- Other children may need to be moved to safe/regulation space if needed.
- If reasonable force is required, follow trained techniques and document thoroughly
- Notify parents/carers in line with policy; agree follow-up actions
- Review and update Risk Reduction Plan and triggers; share learning with team.

Safeguarding and Intimate Care

- Safeguarding Contacts: Designated Teacher – Mrs Little; Deputy Designated Teacher (SCC lead) – Mrs Fowler.
- Any safeguarding concern is reported immediately to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher following school procedures.

- Intimate Care: Plans developed collaboratively with parents/carers; named staff identified; roles clarified; dignity, privacy, and safety prioritised.
- Record-Keeping: Intimate care logs maintained; risk assessments updated regularly.

Health, Safety and Risk Management

- Risk Assessments will be completed for individual pupils, environments, activities (including transport, swimming, trips).
- Rooms are organized to minimize hazards; clear movement zones; equipment checked regularly.
- When children are completing activities outside of the main class it is vital that all risks are assessed and documented.
- Emergency Procedures are in place, including the evacuation and lockdown drills which follow whole-school procedures; PEEPs prepared where required.
- Medical care plans for pupils with medical needs; staff briefed; medication stored and administered per school policy.

Interdisciplinary Support

- Staff within the SCC can access support from a range of professionals. These include:
- Education Psychologists
- EA SSC Link Officer
- Occupational Therapists
- Autism Advisory Service
- Behaviour Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- School Nurse/Doctor
- Speech & Language Therapist (regular sessions for those with identified needs).

- To make a referral the Class Teacher/SCC Lead identifies need, obtain consent where required. She then make referrals. An assessment is completed when the referral is accepted and the interventions are completed and outcomes monitored.
- External recommendations can then be integrated into IEP/PLP and classroom routines.

Data Management and Confidentiality

- Updated pupil data sheets collected annually. needs and contacts verified.
- Pupil records (baselines, IEP/PLP, observations, reports) stored securely within the locked cupboards with the SCC
- Information shared with external agencies on a need-to-know basis and with appropriate consent

- The staff within the SPIM are mindful of the importance of effective communication and the need to not

Transitions

- When pupils transition from the Nest to the Cove there is a transition plan put in place within the third term. Pupils visit the other SCC room to build familiarity; records transferred via established procedures; planned time in new classroom prior to move.
- As the Head of SCC Mrs Fowler, supports transitions from other settings and post primary provisions. She takes a very active role with the receiving school. She establishes contact; prepares social stories and visits; liaises on routines, strengths, needs, and preferences.

Links to other policies

This policy should be read along side our other policies. Specific reference should be made to:

- The Special Needs and Inclusion Policy
- The Teaching and Learning Policy
- The Promoting Positive Behavior Policy
- The Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- The Intimate Care Policy
- The Safe Handling Policy

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- SCC Action Plan: Developed and led by SCC Lead Teacher; reviewed termly.
- Quality Assurance: Lesson observations, work sampling, data tracking, and parent feedback inform improvements.
- With the support of the SST the Head of provision will complete a self evaluation document with the support of the Link officer. This assists with identifying areas of development and the strengthens within the setting.
- Reporting: SCC Lead reports key indicators (attendance, progress, incidents, integration participation) to Principal.
- The SCC is a standing item on the Board of Governors Minutes
- Policy Review: Annually, or sooner if required by changes in guidance or school context.

Copies of this Operational Policy are available from the office, can be found on the school system, the website

Parents/carers who wish to discuss any aspect of the policy are welcome to contact the school to arrange an appointment.