Policy Information Sheet

Name of Policy:	**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy**
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1. Rationale

Hartlepool Free School provides education for learners with a range of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), whose primary need is normally social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). As an academy, we aim to provide high-quality education that meets the needs of every learner. Our focus on personalised and adaptive learning means that teaching, support and the wider curriculum are planned to remove barriers and enable each learner to participate, progress and prepare for adulthood.

Almost all children and young people come to us with Education, Health and Care plans (EHC plans) in place. Others may have received additional support without a statutory plan or may require further assessment. The school recognises that behaviour, attendance, communication, emotional regulation and engagement may indicate unmet or changing needs. Staff will respond with professional curiosity and will not assume that a difficulty is simply part of a learner's existing diagnosis or SEMH profile.

2. Policy aims

- To ensure all our learners understand and work towards overcoming their personal challenges, leaving equipped to make positive choices throughout their lives.
- To enable all learners, whatever their ability, age, sex or background, to enjoy their time in school and achieve their full potential.
- To support staff to offer appropriate learning programmes and planned interventions in line with each learner's needs.
- To ensure that learners progress to appropriate next steps on transition.
- To identify special educational needs early and respond through a graduated assess-plan-do-review approach.
- To use our best endeavours to secure the special educational provision required by learners with SEND and to deliver the provision specified in EHC plans.
- To involve learners and their parents or carers in decisions, target-setting, reviews and transition planning.
- To make reasonable adjustments, prevent discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.
- To ensure safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, medical and mental-health concerns are considered alongside SEND, with concerns referred promptly through the appropriate procedures.

3. Legal framework and guidance

This policy is informed by the following legislation and guidance, as amended or replaced:

- Children and Families Act 2014, including the duties to use best endeavours and to cooperate with local authorities.
- Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014.

- Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years (January 2015, with current updates).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, effective from 1 September 2026.
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions: statutory guidance.
- Allergy safety in schools: statutory guidance (2026).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children and current statutory attendance guidance.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, where applicable to academy requirements.

The school also publishes and reviews its SEN Information Report annually. The report explains the school's current provision and arrangements in the detail required by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014.

4. Definitions and identification of SEND

A learner has special educational needs where they have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A disability is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The needs of individual learners are identified in a variety of ways:

- Referring schools complete an admission form, including details of SEND, medical needs, learning needs, behaviour, safeguarding and current professional involvement.
- Further contact is made with the Academy SENCO to establish additional details and obtain relevant records.
- Parents and carers attend transition or meet-and-greet sessions and are invited to share concerns, strengths, successful strategies, SEND and medical information.
- An initial assessment period normally lasts four weeks and includes appropriate academic, communication, wellbeing, sensory, physical and functional assessments.
- Any concerns identified during assessment result in consultation with the SENCO and, where appropriate, further assessment or specialist advice.
- Staff observations, learner voice, parent or carer information, attendance, behaviour and progress information are considered together.
- Educational psychology and other specialist services may be consulted where appropriate.
- Care plans, Student Profiles, CASS Plans, learning plans and risk assessments are created or updated following assessment and whenever needs change.

The school will not delay appropriate support while evidence is gathered or while a referral, assessment or diagnosis is awaited. Where progress is less than expected, staff will consider the quality of teaching, attendance, safeguarding, health and wellbeing, English as an additional language and other contextual factors before deciding whether special educational provision is required.

5. The school's approach to SEN support

Learners with SEND have varying individual needs and require a range of personalised support. All teachers are teachers of learners with SEND and remain responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the learners they teach.

- All learners access a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum, adapted where needed to improve access rather than reduce entitlement.
- High-quality teaching and adaptive practice are the first response to identified needs.
- Learners who require a curriculum that is additional to or different from the school's universal offer receive planned intervention and are monitored through the school's inclusion or intervention systems.
- Support follows the graduated approach: assess, plan, do and review. Targets, provision and impact are reviewed with the learner and parents or carers at appropriate intervals.
- The class or subject teacher works with the SENCO and relevant staff to establish a clear analysis of need and remains responsible for implementing agreed provision.
- Specialist staff and external professionals are involved where their advice is required. Recommendations are considered, recorded, shared with relevant staff and reviewed for impact.
- Tutor teams ensure staff understand each learner's needs, outcomes, reasonable adjustments and effective strategies. Information is shared securely through approved school systems, Student Profiles, CASS Plans and risk assessments.
- Resources, including digital and remote-learning resources, are made accessible as appropriate.
- The Senior Leadership Team and SENCO monitor teaching, provision, progress, attendance and outcomes for learners with SEND.
- Parents, carers and learners are involved in planning and review. Their views are recorded and taken seriously, with communication support provided where needed.
- Transition planning includes information sharing with receiving providers, careers education, preparation for adulthood and access to impartial information, advice and guidance.
- Where needs cannot reasonably be met through SEN Support, the school will discuss requesting an EHC needs assessment with the learner, parents or carers and relevant professionals.

6. EHC needs assessments and EHC plans

- The school will cooperate fully with the local authority and provide requested information and evidence for an EHC needs assessment or review.
- A request for an EHC needs assessment may be made by the school, a parent or carer, the young person or another person specified in law. The school will support families and young people to understand the process and obtain impartial advice.
- Where consulted about being named in a draft EHC plan, the school will respond within the statutory consultation period and provide clear evidence about whether needs can be met and what provision would be required.
- The school will admit a learner where it is named in the final EHC plan, subject to the statutory framework.
- The local authority is responsible for securing the special educational provision specified in Section F. The school will deliver the provision assigned to it, deploy resources appropriately and notify the local authority promptly if there is a concern that specified provision cannot be secured.
- All staff teaching or supporting a learner with an EHC plan will have access to the relevant information about needs, outcomes, provision, health and safety, and reasonable adjustments on a need-to-know basis.
- Learners and parents or carers will be actively supported to contribute to the development and implementation of the plan and to understand available rights of appeal, mediation and disagreement-resolution services.
- EHC plans and associated records will be stored securely and shared lawfully. Relevant information will be transferred promptly when a learner moves setting.

- Where a learner's needs or circumstances change significantly, the school may request an early review or reassessment. An early review is not dependent on waiting six months after an assessment and does not automatically result in a new final plan.

7. Reviewing an EHC plan

The local authority must review an EHC plan at least every 12 months. The school will cooperate with the local authority and, when requested, convene and hold the annual review meeting on its behalf.

- The child's parent or the young person, a local authority representative, relevant health and social-care representatives and other appropriate professionals will be invited and given at least two weeks' notice.
- Advice and information will be requested from those invited and circulated to all invitees at least two weeks before the meeting.
- The review will be person-centred and will consider progress towards outcomes and aspirations, the appropriateness and effectiveness of provision, changing needs, attendance, health, social care, preparation for adulthood and whether amendments are required.
- From Year 9 onwards, each review will include a clear focus on preparing for adulthood, including employment, independent living, community participation and health.
- The school will prepare and send a report of the meeting to everyone invited within two weeks. The report will set out recommendations and any differences of view.
- Within four weeks of the review meeting, the local authority must decide whether to maintain the plan unchanged, amend it or cease to maintain it, and must notify the parent or young person and the school.
- If the local authority proposes amendments, it is responsible for completing the statutory amendment process. The school will continue to deliver the existing plan until it is formally amended.
- An early review may be requested where needs, placement, provision, risk, attendance or circumstances have changed significantly, or where the plan is no longer enabling suitable progress.

8. Supporting learners with medical conditions

Medical conditions do not automatically amount to SEN, although a learner may have both a medical condition and SEND. The school's detailed arrangements are set out in its Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and Administration of Medication policies. These arrangements will be coordinated with this policy, the learner's EHC plan and safeguarding procedures.

- The school will make arrangements to support learners with medical conditions so they can access a full education and participate as fully as possible in school life.
- An Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP) will be developed where it is necessary or helpful. It will be produced with parents or carers, the learner and relevant healthcare professionals, implemented by the school and reviewed at least annually or sooner if needs change.
- IHPs will identify the condition, triggers, symptoms, treatment, medication, educational and emotional support, emergency arrangements, staff responsibilities, training, cover arrangements and requirements for trips or off-site activities.
- Sufficient staff will receive suitable training and be confirmed as competent before undertaking medical procedures. First-aid training alone does not establish competence for condition-specific procedures.

- Medicines will be managed in accordance with the school's medication procedures. Learners who are competent will be supported to manage their own health needs safely where appropriate.
- Emergency services will be called when required. Staff will follow the learner's IHP and emergency procedures; the Principal does not provide substitute parental consent for medical treatment.
- Learners will not be prevented from accessing medication, food, drink, toilets, rest or other arrangements needed to manage their condition, and will not be penalised for medically related absence.
- A reduced or part-time timetable will be used only in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest necessary period, with parental agreement, a clear plan, regular review, safeguarding oversight and a planned return to full-time education. It will not be used to manage behaviour or because the school is unable to meet need.
- Where health needs prevent attendance and suitable education cannot be provided by the school, the school will work promptly with the local authority under the statutory guidance on education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

9. Promoting mental health, wellbeing and safeguarding

- The school will promote resilience, kindness, growth mindset and personal responsibility to build confidence and readiness to learn.
- Positive classroom management, small-group work and strong relationships will be used to promote positive behaviour, social development and self-esteem.
- Mentoring, Thrive-informed practice, Zones of Regulation and other appropriate interventions will support learners experiencing SEMH difficulties.
- Where in-school intervention is not sufficient, advice or support will be sought from external services, including CAMHS, educational psychology, social care and other specialist agencies.
- Learners with SEND may face additional safeguarding risks and barriers to recognising or reporting abuse. Staff must maintain professional curiosity, provide accessible reporting routes and follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Staff must not assume that injury, distress, withdrawal, dysregulation, school avoidance, sexualised behaviour, communication changes or deterioration in presentation is explained by SEND or SEMH. Safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL or a Deputy DSL.
- The SENCO and DSL will work together where SEND, mental health, attendance, behaviour, exploitation, online harm or child-on-child abuse overlap.

10. Training and resources

- All staff have access to a comprehensive continuing professional development programme, including training related to SEND and the needs represented in the school.
- Staff may request further advice or training from the Principal and SENCO.
- Educational psychology and other specialists may provide consultation, training and case advice.
- Staff have access to specialist resources and may request equipment and adaptations for individual learners.
- SEND responsibilities, reasonable adjustments, safeguarding vulnerabilities and the school's graduated approach will form part of staff induction and regular updates.
- The SENCO will be appropriately qualified and supported to undertake relevant professional development. Where statutory SENCO qualification requirements apply, these will be met within the required timeframe.

- Training will be evaluated through practice, pupil outcomes, staff confidence, learning walks, reviews and feedback rather than attendance alone.

11. Roles and responsibilities

11.1 Trust Board

- Approve and review this policy and ensure that legal duties relating to SEND and disability are fulfilled.
- Ensure appropriate strategic oversight, resources, challenge and assurance, including oversight of the SEN Information Report and accessibility arrangements.
- Monitor the use and impact of SEND funding and the outcomes of learners with SEND.
- Designate a link trustee for SEND and maintain clear published information about the current postholder.

11.2 Principal and senior leaders

- Ensure this policy is implemented and that SEND is integral to curriculum, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, staffing and improvement planning.
- Ensure the SENCO has sufficient time, status, resources and access to leadership to carry out the role effectively.
- Monitor the progress, attendance, inclusion and outcomes of learners with SEND and the impact of provision and funding.

11.3 SENCO

- Coordinate the school's SEND provision and the day-to-day operation of this policy.
- Advise colleagues on the graduated approach, reasonable adjustments, EHC plans and deployment of resources.
- Liaise with parents, carers, learners, previous and receiving settings, the local authority and external professionals.
- Maintain oversight of SEND records, statutory processes, annual reviews, transition and staff development.
- Work closely with the DSL, attendance lead, behaviour lead, careers lead and medical lead where needs overlap.

11.4 Teachers and tutor teams

- Remain responsible and accountable for the progress and development of learners they teach, including where support staff or specialists are involved.
- Know and implement the learner's EHC provision, Student Profile, CASS Plan, reasonable adjustments and agreed strategies.
- Assess progress, adapt teaching, contribute to reviews and raise concerns promptly with the SENCO.

11.5 Support staff

- Implement agreed provision under the direction of the teacher and SENCO, promote independence and provide accurate feedback about impact.
- Complete required training and follow safeguarding, medical and risk-management arrangements.

11.6 Learners and parents or carers

- Learners will be supported to express their views, understand their targets and contribute to decisions in ways that are accessible to them.
- Parents and carers are expected to share relevant information, participate in planning and reviews and work in partnership with the school. The school will communicate openly and provide reasonable support to enable participation.

12. Record keeping, confidentiality and information sharing

- SEND, EHC plan, medical and intervention records will be accurate, current, securely stored and accessible only to staff who need the information to carry out their duties.
- Safeguarding records will be maintained through the school's safeguarding system and managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Information will be shared lawfully and proportionately in the best interests of the learner. Data protection law is not a barrier to safeguarding or to securing appropriate SEND provision.
- When a learner transfers, relevant SEND, safeguarding and medical information will be transferred securely and promptly to the receiving setting.

13. Accessibility, equality and reasonable adjustments

The school will make reasonable adjustments to avoid substantial disadvantage and will take anticipatory steps to improve access to the curriculum, information, buildings, activities and services. The school's Accessibility Plan sets out longer-term actions. Decisions will be based on individual need and will not apply a blanket approach to learners with the same diagnosis.

The Trust will have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. The impact of policies and practices on disabled learners and other protected groups will be monitored.

14. Bullying and child-on-child abuse

Bullying, discriminatory behaviour and child-on-child abuse will not be tolerated. Learners with SEND may be particularly vulnerable and may face additional communication barriers. Concerns will be addressed under the Anti-Bullying Policy, Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Where harm or risk is identified, safeguarding procedures take priority over restorative or behaviour processes.

15. Complaints and disagreement resolution

Concerns about SEND provision should normally be raised with the tutor or class teacher and SENCO in the first instance. Unresolved concerns may be pursued through the Trust Complaints Policy. Parents and young people may also access the local SEND Information, Advice and Support Service, mediation, disagreement-resolution services and the SEND Tribunal where statutory rights apply. Safeguarding concerns must be raised immediately through safeguarding procedures rather than delayed through the complaints process.

16. Monitoring, publication and review

- The SENCO and senior leaders will monitor implementation through provision reviews, annual reviews, progress and attendance information, pupil and parent voice, quality assurance, complaints and outcomes.
- The Trust Board will receive appropriate reports and assurance while protecting individual confidentiality.
- The SEN Information Report will be reviewed and published at least annually and updated during the year where significant changes occur.
- This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance or the school's arrangements change.