INCLUSION STRATEGY

Removing barriers. Enabling participation.
Building belonging and independence.



RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL

INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

This policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework
and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures and guidance.

RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

OUR COMMITMENT

At Riverside Bridge School, every policy reflects our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and ambitious school community in which every pupil is valued, every voice matters and every family is respected and supported.

Our policies translate our values into consistent practice. They support high expectations, clear responsibilities, effective partnership and informed decision-making, ensuring that the needs, rights, wellbeing and future outcomes of our pupils remain at the heart of our work.

We work collaboratively, act with integrity and continually reflect upon and improve our practice to achieve the best possible outcomes for every pupil.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Our Policy Principles underpin how we work together and guide the decisions and actions we take to support every pupil and their families.



POLICY PURPOSE & FRAMEWORK

Riverside Bridge School policies set out the expectations, responsibilities and approaches that support safe, consistent and high-quality practice across the school. They translate our values, statutory responsibilities and professional expectations into clear guidance for everyday decision-making and practice.

Each policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures, statutory guidance and school frameworks referenced within the document.

Policies apply to the members of the school community identified within each document, including staff, governors, parents and carers, volunteers, contractors and other professionals where relevant. Everyone is expected to understand and apply the requirements appropriate to their role and to seek further guidance where clarification is required.

CURRICULUM DRIVERS



Our Drivers provide a shared golden thread across curriculum, school life, policy and leadership, helping ensure that our decisions and practice remain focused on the experiences and futures we want for every pupil.

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STATEMENT OF INTENT

This strategy sets out Riverside Bridge School's commitment to ensuring that every pupil is able to belong, communicate, participate, learn, develop independence and prepare meaningfully for their future. Inclusion at Riverside Bridge School is not understood simply as access to a place, lesson or provision. It is the deliberate identification and removal of barriers so that pupils with complex special educational needs and disabilities can participate as fully, meaningfully and independently as possible in learning, relationships, school life and their wider community.

As a specialist school for pupils aged 4 to 19, our context is distinct. All pupils at Riverside Bridge School have identified special educational needs and disabilities, and many experience significant and interacting needs across communication, cognition, sensory processing, physical development, health, regulation and independence. Inclusion therefore cannot be judged simply by whether a pupil is present within a classroom or activity. It must be judged by whether the pupil can understand what is happening, communicate, exercise choice, engage, develop relationships, experience belonging, make progress and increasingly influence what happens in their own life.

Our approach reflects the direction established within the Department for Education's 2026 inclusion guidance while interpreting this appropriately for specialist provision. The DfE identifies seven principles encompassing ambitious leadership and governance, evidence-informed support, adaptive teaching and curriculum, enrichment beyond the classroom, belonging and participation, strong partnership with families and wider services, and increasingly accessible environments.

At Riverside Bridge School, inclusion begins with **Understanding the Individual**. We recognise that barriers do not sit solely within the pupil. They may be created or intensified by inaccessible communication, unclear environments, excessive sensory demand, inappropriate expectations, over-support, inconsistent adult practice, insufficient processing time, limited opportunities to practise and generalise skills, or fragmented provision around the pupil. Our responsibility is therefore to examine continually what we can change within our teaching, communication, environments, systems and adult practice.

Our curriculum provides the central architecture for this work. Through our four Learning Pathways, five Curriculum Drivers, Principles for Learning, adapted SCERTS model and other specialist pedagogical approaches, pupils are provided with different routes into learning while maintaining ambitious expectations. **BridgeWorks - Structured Teaching at RBS** strengthens this further by helping staff make information, time, communication, physical environments and expectations increasingly understandable and by deliberately developing participation and independence.

Inclusion also extends well beyond access to lessons. Pupils should experience friendship, culture, recreation, community, recognition, decision-making and opportunities that prepare them for adulthood. From the earliest stages of development, we therefore build communication, regulation, choice, participation and independence towards increasingly meaningful engagement with the wider world.

During 2026-2027, Riverside Bridge School is also working towards the **School Belonging Award** and the **SEND Inclusion Award**. These will provide external frameworks through which established school practice can be evaluated, challenged and strengthened. The School Belonging Award considers leadership, relationships, safety, learning provision, community connection and whole-school belonging, while the SEND Inclusion Award provides an additional external lens across leadership, teaching, accessibility, pupil and family participation, workforce development and the impact of provision.

Inclusion is therefore everybody's responsibility. Teachers, co-educators, specialists, therapists, leaders, families and external professionals each contribute to whether barriers are reduced and whether pupils experience meaningful participation.

Our commitment to inclusion

Riverside Bridge School will identify and respond to barriers at individual, group and whole-school level while ensuring that complexity of need never becomes a reason to lower expectations for communication, participation, achievement, dignity or future aspirations.

We will use evidence from pupil progress, communication, independence, engagement, attendance, regulation, safeguarding, Preparing for Adulthood, family experience and specialist review to determine whether our approaches are making a meaningful difference. Where barriers remain, we will adapt provision rather than simply describe the pupil's difficulty.

Through this strategy, Riverside Bridge School commits to building a school in which every pupil belongs, every form of communication is valued, participation is actively enabled and independence is intentionally developed. Our ambition is not simply for pupils to access Riverside Bridge School, but for each pupil to leave us better able to communicate, participate, make choices and take their place within their community.

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APPROVED BY: Governing Board

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Section 01

CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC POSITION

Understanding our context. Defining our ambition.

Riverside Bridge School provides specialist education for pupils aged 4–19 with complex SEND. Our pupils have diverse developmental profiles and may experience significant needs across communication and interaction, cognition and learning, sensory processing, physical development, health, social and emotional development, regulation and independence.

This diversity means that inclusion cannot be achieved through one teaching model, one curriculum route or one definition of success. Pupils of a similar chronological age may require very different routes into learning and may demonstrate understanding, participation and progress in very different ways.

Our curriculum is therefore organised through four Learning Pathways.

- ✓ **Flow 1a - Pre-formal - Exploratory** supports pupils developing exploration, sensory awareness, early interaction, engagement and play.
- ✓ **Flow 1b - Pre-formal - Emerging Symbolic** supports pupils developing joint attention, social intent, purposeful interaction and emerging symbolic understanding.
- ✓ **Flow 2 - Semi-formal** extends symbolic understanding, functional application and increasing independence.
- ✓ **Flow 3 - Formal** supports pupils who can increasingly access conceptual learning, reasoning and appropriately adapted subject teaching.

Across all four pathways, our five Curriculum Drivers - **Sense of Self, Community, Culture, Wonder and Future** - ensure that education is concerned not only with what pupils learn, but with who they are becoming and how they will participate in the world around them.

Our strategy therefore begins from an already established specialist offer. We are not introducing inclusion as an additional layer of provision. Instead, this strategy provides a framework through which we evaluate how consistently and effectively our existing curriculum, pedagogy, communication systems, environments and workforce enable participation.

The DfE guidance emphasises the importance of identifying commonly occurring barriers across a cohort rather than relying solely on diagnostic labels or statutory categories. This is particularly relevant at Riverside Bridge School because pupils with different diagnoses may experience similar barriers while pupils with apparently similar diagnoses may require very different approaches.

During 2026-2027, our external work through the School Belonging Award and SEND Inclusion Award will provide additional scrutiny of this established practice. The purpose is to use external challenge alongside our own quality assurance to identify what should be sustained and what can be strengthened further.

Section 02

WHAT DOES INCLUSION MEAN AT RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL

Removing barriers. Enabling meaningful participation.

At Riverside Bridge School, inclusion means creating the conditions in which every pupil can participate meaningfully.

Physical presence is not enough. A pupil may be sitting within a lesson but unable to understand the expectation, communicate a preference, access the learning or regulate within the environment. Conversely, a pupil accessing the same learning through a substantially different route may be fully included because the activity has been designed around their developmental profile and communication needs. We therefore understand inclusion through the pupil's experience rather than through sameness.

An increasingly included pupil is better able to understand what is happening, communicate with others, influence decisions, participate in learning and relationships, experience success, develop independence and access opportunities beyond their immediate classroom.

This will look different for different pupils. For one young person, independence may mean travelling within the community with increasing autonomy. For another pupil, it may mean following a visual schedule independently. For another, it may mean communicating acceptance or rejection through eye gaze, movement or vocalisation.

These are equally valid when they represent meaningful progress for the individual.
Inclusion therefore does not mean reducing difference. It means recognising difference and designing environments, teaching and support so that difference does not unnecessarily restrict participation.

Section 03

NATIONAL CONTEXT AND PRINCIPLES

Responding to national direction. Applying it meaningfully.

The Department for Education's 2026 inclusion guidance was developed principally in relation to the Inclusive Mainstream Fund and the government's wider direction of travel towards a more inclusive education system. It is non-statutory guidance and is written largely through a mainstream lens.

Riverside Bridge School has nevertheless chosen to develop its own Inclusion Strategy because the underlying principles are highly relevant to specialist education.

We particularly support the national emphasis on understanding barriers, strengthening high-quality teaching, building inclusion into the universal offer, working in partnership with families and services and evaluating impact rather than measuring activity alone.

The national principles align strongly with Riverside Bridge School's existing approach. Ambitious leadership and governance connect with our strategic oversight and quality assurance. Adaptive teaching aligns with our Learning Pathways and specialist pedagogy. Accessible environments connect directly with BridgeWorks. Family partnership and wider services reflect our multidisciplinary model. Enrichment and participation beyond the classroom connect with our Curriculum Drivers and Preparing for Adulthood.

The DfE also encourages schools to focus on a manageable number of meaningful approaches and implement them consistently rather than creating a large number of disconnected initiatives. This is reflected throughout this strategy.

Section 04

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Identifying barriers. Understanding what gets in the way.

A central principle of our strategy is that a pupil's SEND should not automatically be described as the barrier. A pupil may have significant communication needs, but the immediate barrier may be adults speaking too quickly, symbols not being available or insufficient processing time. A pupil may experience significant sensory differences, but the barrier may be an environment that is unnecessarily demanding. A pupil may require high levels of adult support, while the barrier to independence may be that adults intervene before the pupil has an opportunity to respond. This distinction is important because it shifts professional thinking from describing difficulty towards changing provision.

Across our cohort, barriers may arise through communication breakdown, sensory demand, physical or medical access needs, uncertainty, transitions, difficulty understanding time, challenges with generalising learning, reduced opportunities for meaningful choice or environments that rely too heavily on spoken instruction.

Other barriers can be created unintentionally through adult practice. Excessive prompting, adults routinely speaking for pupils, constant one-to-one proximity, inconsistent approaches or completing tasks on a pupil's behalf can reduce agency and independence even where the intention is supportive.

Barriers may also arise when provision is fragmented. Specialist advice, curriculum targets, EHCP outcomes, family priorities and classroom practice need to connect around the same pupil. When these operate as separate systems, staff may struggle to understand what matters most and the pupil may experience inconsistent expectations.

We also recognise barriers beyond school. Pupils with complex SEND may have fewer opportunities than their peers to participate in community life, leisure, relationships, work-related learning and age-appropriate independence because these experiences often require additional planning or support.

Our task is therefore to ask repeatedly: What is getting in the way of this pupil participating, and what can we change?

Section 05

INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND UNIVERSAL OFFER

Designing for access. Adapting for individual need.

The curriculum is one of the most important mechanisms through which Riverside Bridge School delivers inclusion. For pupils with complex SEND, adaptive teaching cannot simply mean taking a common task and simplifying it. In many cases, the route into learning needs to be designed differently from the beginning.

Our Principles for Learning provide the foundation for this work.

- **Understanding the Individual** ensures that planning starts with knowledge of the pupil rather than the activity.
- **Positive and Effective Relationships** recognise that secure, responsive relationships create conditions for communication and learning.
- **Learning and Development** maintains ambitious progression across different developmental pathways.
- **Enabling Environments** requires us to consider what needs to change around the pupil so that learning becomes accessible.

Our curriculum then connects aspiration to everyday teaching:

EHCP aspirations and outcomes → Learning Pathway → Curriculum and Development Profile → personalised targets → specialist teaching and support → assessment → generalisation → Preparing for Adulthood.

This coherence is important. EHCP provision should not sit separately from curriculum planning. Specialist recommendations should not become isolated interventions. Personalised targets should not become disconnected from broader learning and future outcomes.

BridgeWorks provides the structured teaching architecture that supports consistent implementation. Through Physical Structure, Visual Schedules, Work Systems, Visual Structure, a Communication-Rich Environment and Independent Learning, pupils are supported to understand where they are, what is happening, what is expected and what they can do increasingly for themselves.

Our universal offer is therefore not universal because every pupil receives the same provision. It is universal because every pupil benefits from the same underlying commitments to accessibility, communication, clarity, participation, meaningful progression and independence.

Section 06

COMMUNICATION, VOICE AND CHOICE

Enabling communication. Recognising voice. Supporting choice.

Communication is fundamental to inclusion at Riverside Bridge School. A pupil cannot participate meaningfully if they do not have a way to understand what is happening, express themselves, influence decisions or communicate how they feel.
Communication is therefore not a discrete curriculum area or something that belongs only within speech and language intervention. It is a right, a curriculum priority and an essential condition for learning, safeguarding, relationships, regulation, independence and belonging.

Our approach is informed by Total Communication and our adapted SCERTS model. Within our adapted SCERTS framework, we particularly draw on Social Communication and Emotional Regulation, including the development of joint attention, symbol use, co-regulation and self-regulation. These provide a coherent way of understanding how pupils connect with others, communicate increasingly intentionally and develop the regulation required for participation.

For pupils at earlier developmental stages, this may involve shared attention, anticipation, social intent, intentional movement or recognising familiar communication partners. For pupils working at increasingly symbolic levels, it may involve using signs, symbols, communication aids or spoken language to share meaning and increasingly communicate across contexts.
Depending on the pupil, communication may include speech, Makaton, symbols, objects of reference, photographs, communication aids, eye gaze, gesture, body movement, facial expression, vocalisation or highly individualised responses. No communication mode is valued more highly simply because it is more conventional.

Understanding the individual is particularly important where communication is subtle or emerging. Staff must know how pupils communicate pleasure, discomfort, refusal, preference, uncertainty, anticipation, request and rejection. This understanding needs to be shared across the pupil's team so that communication does not depend entirely on one familiar adult.

Our approach also goes beyond making communication resources available. Adults must deliberately create Means, Reasons and Opportunities for communication. If adults anticipate every need, make every decision, ask closed questions or intervene too quickly, pupils may have little reason or opportunity to communicate independently.

We therefore expect adults to use appropriate processing time, create genuine communication opportunities and avoid unnecessary prompting. Pupils should experience that communicating something has a consequence.

Choice is an important aspect of agency, but meaningful choice is not simply presenting two symbols. Pupils need opportunities to choose activities, people, resources, ways of participating and, where appropriate, to reject or stop an interaction.

We will continue developing our understanding of assent and communicative autonomy. “No”, “stop”, “finished”, “help”, “more” or “I do not want this” may be communicated through movement, gesture, facial expression, vocalisation or withdrawal. These communications should be recognised and responded to sensitively, whilst balancing them appropriately with safeguarding, health, essential care and other responsibilities.

Pupil voice at Riverside Bridge School therefore cannot be limited to questionnaires or conventional councils. Some pupils will be able to tell us directly what they think. Others will require symbols, photographs, supported choice, observation of consistent preferences or other accessible methods.

Our responsibility is to find a meaningful route through which every pupil can influence their experience.

Our ambition is not simply that every pupil has access to a communication system. It is that their communication is noticed, understood and capable of changing what happens next.

Section 07

INDEPENDENCE AND REDUCED ADULT DEPENDENCY

Developing independence. Reducing unnecessary support.

Many Riverside Bridge School pupils require substantial adult support to remain safe, communicate, access learning and manage personal or medical needs. This support is essential. However, specialist settings must continually manage the tension between providing enough support and inadvertently creating dependency.

Our whole-school expectation is therefore to provide the least help necessary for successful participation, whilst never withdrawing support required for safety, communication, health, dignity or meaningful access. This means structuring the environment before increasing adult direction, using visual and environmental cues, allowing processing time, waiting for initiation, choosing the least intrusive prompt likely to be effective and fading prompts wherever pupils develop competence.

BridgeWorks is central to this. A visual schedule can replace repeated adult instruction. A finished work system can reduce dependence on adults telling pupils when a task is complete. Physical structure can make expectations clearer. Communication systems can enable pupils to ask for help rather than adults anticipating every need.

We also recognise that successful completion is not the only measure of progress. If a pupil completes every task only because an adult directs each stage, then the level of support must form part of our evaluation.

For younger pupils and those working at earlier developmental stages, independence may mean making a choice, initiating an interaction, completing one step of a familiar routine or communicating that something is finished. For older pupils it may increasingly involve community participation, personal organisation, travel, enterprise, daily living and work-related learning.

Our measure is not independence from support at all costs. It is whether each pupil is increasingly doing as much as they meaningfully can for themselves.

Section 08

REGULATION, BELONGING AND PARTICIPATION

Supporting regulation. Building belonging. Enabling participation.

Belonging is more than being welcomed into school. It is the experience of being known, valued, understood and recognised as a member of a community. For Riverside pupils, belonging depends heavily on relationships, communication, emotional and sensory safety, predictability and opportunities to contribute. Pupils are more able to communicate, interact and learn when they feel sufficiently secure and regulated.

Our Positive Support approach provides the overarching framework for understanding distress and supporting participation. This is strengthened by our adapted SCERTS model, including Mutual Regulation and Self-Regulation, alongside Zones of Regulation, sensory strategies, Total Communication and our knowledge of individual pupils.

When a pupil is experiencing distress or reduced regulation, staff should consider what may be making participation difficult. Communication breakdown, pain or discomfort, sensory overload or under-stimulation, uncertainty, transitions, social demand, unfamiliar environments, loss of control or inaccessible expectations may all contribute.

The first question is therefore not simply “How do we stop this?” but **“**What is making this situation difficult for this pupil, and what can we change?”

We use incident records and other school evidence to identify patterns and understand whether adjustments are reducing barriers. However, incident frequency alone is not a sufficient measure of inclusion. A pupil may appear settled but be passive, disengaged or highly dependent.

We therefore evaluate participation more broadly through engagement, communication, agency, relationships, regulation and meaningful involvement in learning and school life.

Belonging also requires connection with other people. Staff will provide opportunities for shared attention, interaction, peer relationships, collective experiences and participation within class, house and whole-school life. These experiences will be adapted so that pupils across all Learning Pathways can participate meaningfully rather than simply be physically present.

Recognition and celebration are also important. Achievement at Riverside includes progress in communication, independence, learning, relationships, regulation, perseverance, participation, community involvement and personal development. Our recognition systems must enable pupils across every pathway and age group to experience genuine success without becoming tokenistic or age-inappropriate.

Our work towards the School Belonging Award provides an additional opportunity during 2026–27 to listen systematically to pupils, families and staff about what creates connection and what may weaken it. The award framework looks across leadership, relationships, safety, learning provision, community connection and whole-school culture.

Our ambition is not simply for pupils to be safe and settled. We want them to experience Riverside Bridge School as their school - somewhere they are known, contribute, achieve, are recognised and belong.

Section 09

EQUITY, DIGNITY AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Promoting equity. Protecting dignity. Sustaining ambition.

Inclusion does not mean providing identical experiences.
Equity means providing the communication, support, adaptations, environment and opportunities each pupil requires to participate meaningfully. For pupils with complex SEND, identical approaches can themselves create exclusion when differences in communication, cognition, physical access, sensory processing or regulation are ignored. Adaptation must not, however, become synonymous with reduced ambition.

Pupils working at earlier developmental levels remain children and young people of their chronological age. They are entitled to dignity, privacy, age-respectful environments, cultural experiences, relationships, appropriate challenge and meaningful opportunities to contribute.

We will actively guard against infantilisation, unnecessary restriction, adults routinely speaking for pupils or assumptions about what pupils cannot achieve.

High expectations also mean ensuring pupils across all Learning Pathways experience achievement and recognition. Success may look different for different pupils, but communication, independence, participation, perseverance, relationships, regulation, learning, community involvement and personal development can all represent significant achievement.

Pupils should experience themselves not merely as recipients of care or provision, but as members of the school community whose communication, preferences, achievements and presence matter.

Section 10

INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Creating accessibility. Reducing environmental barriers.

Accessibility at Riverside Bridge School extends well beyond physical access.
A space may be physically accessible but still difficult for a pupil to use because it is too noisy, expectations are unclear, communication is unavailable or the pupil cannot predict what will happen next.
We therefore consider accessibility across physical, sensory, communication, cognitive and emotional dimensions, alongside access to information.

BridgeWorks enables environments to communicate. Physical structure, schedules, work systems and visual information help pupils understand where to go, what to do and what happens next. Total Communication and adapted SCERTS-informed practice support communication accessibility. Sensory and physical adaptations support regulation and participation.

Where pupils require individual positioning, equipment, moving and handling arrangements, sensory provision or environmental adaptation, these are planned using appropriate specialist advice.

Accessibility should also be dynamic. Needs change, pupils develop and environments alter. Staff and leaders must continually ask whether a space or system is enabling the greatest possible participation and independence.

During 2026-2027, our external inclusion work will provide an additional opportunity to test and strengthen the accessibility of our provision alongside our established internal evaluation.

Section 11

COMMUNITY INCLUSION AND PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

Extending participation. Preparing for adulthood.

Specialist provision should be a bridge into wider life, not a boundary around it.
Riverside Bridge School has an important responsibility to provide specialist environments and teaching. At the same time, our pupils are members of families, neighbourhoods and communities and will eventually move beyond school. An education that enables participation only within the highly supported environment of specialist provision is therefore not enough.

Our Curriculum Drivers of **Community** and **Future** make this ambition explicit. Pupils need opportunities to encounter different people, places, expectations and experiences and to learn that the communication, regulation, independence and social skills developed at school have a purpose beyond the classroom.
Preparing for Adulthood begins from the earliest stages of education. A pupil learning to make a choice, wait, communicate a preference, tolerate a transition, participate in personal care or complete part of a familiar routine is developing foundations for adult life.

As pupils grow older, these foundations become increasingly connected to the four Preparing for Adulthood areas of **Employment; Independent Living; Friends, Relationships and Community; and Good Health and Wellbeing**.

What these outcomes look like will vary significantly.

- Employment may involve work experience, enterprise and understanding workplace expectations for some pupils. For others it may involve developing sustained participation, purposeful activity, communication and choice.
- Independent Living may involve travel, shopping, personal organisation and domestic tasks for some pupils, while for others it may involve communicating a need, participating in personal care, tolerating a new environment or completing part of a daily routine with reduced assistance.
- Friends, Relationships and Community includes more than being present around other people. Pupils need opportunities to develop social connection, shared interests, familiarity with community spaces and experiences in which they are contributors rather than passive participants.
- Good Health and Wellbeing includes developing awareness of personal health, communicating discomfort, participating in healthcare routines, engaging in physical activity, developing regulation and becoming increasingly able to contribute to decisions affecting one's own wellbeing.

Community learning therefore requires a clear purpose. Visiting a shop, café, leisure facility, workplace or community venue is not itself evidence of inclusion. Staff should know what the pupil is learning, what support is required, what can potentially be reduced and how the learning will be revisited and generalised.

Generalisation is particularly important. Skills demonstrated only with one adult or in one familiar classroom may not yet be available to the pupil in everyday life. Pupils require repeated, carefully planned opportunities to use communication, regulation, social and independence skills across different people, places and contexts.

For older pupils, our developing KS5 offer, Community Skills, Skills for Life, Enterprise and work-related opportunities provide increasingly authentic experiences of participation, responsibility and contribution.

Our ultimate ambition is not simply to prepare pupils to leave Riverside Bridge School. It is to prepare them to have a life beyond Riverside Bridge School in which they are known, heard, involved and able to contribute.

Section 12

FAMILIES, PARTNERSHIPS AND INTEGRATED WORKING

Working with families. Joining up support.

Families are essential partners in understanding and supporting our pupils. They hold knowledge of their child's history, communication, health, regulation, preferences, routines, relationships, culture and aspirations that cannot be reproduced through professional assessment alone.
Effective inclusion therefore requires more than informing families. It requires genuine partnership in which family knowledge and professional knowledge inform one another.

This begins with listening. Families should have meaningful opportunities to share what is important to and for their child, what is working, what has changed, what they are concerned about and what they hope their child will achieve.
Their contribution should be visible within EHCP reviews, personalised target-setting, transition planning, Positive Support and Preparing for Adulthood.

We also recognise that families themselves are diverse. Communication with families must therefore be accessible, respectful and responsive. Families should not need specialist knowledge of SEND systems in order to participate meaningfully in decisions about their child.

Partnership is especially important where a pupil communicates differently across environments. A response consistently understood at home may help school interpret emerging communication in class. Equally, strategies developed successfully at school may support participation elsewhere. Appropriate sharing can therefore strengthen generalisation and consistency.

Many pupils are supported by a range of services, including speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, health professionals, CAMHS, social care, Early Help and local authority teams. The presence of multiple professionals does not automatically create integrated provision.

Our role is to ensure that appropriate specialist advice becomes usable practice. Recommendations should connect with the pupil's curriculum, EHCP outcomes, personalised targets, communication approach, environment and everyday routines.

Teachers and classroom teams need to understand not just what has been recommended, but how that recommendation should influence everyday teaching, communication and participation.

There may also be times when different professional priorities need to be reconciled. Education, health, family priorities and the pupil's own communication may not always point towards exactly the same immediate action. Integrated working requires professionals to discuss these tensions openly and retain the whole pupil at the centre.

Partnership also extends beyond statutory services. Other schools and settings, community organisations, employers, leisure facilities and local partners can help create meaningful opportunities for participation and transition.

During 2026-2027 we will continue strengthening the relationship between family aspirations, pupil communication, EHCP outcomes, specialist advice, personalised targets and classroom practice so that pupils experience a coherent programme rather than a collection of separate interventions.
Our aim is for families and professionals to be able to see not only what support surrounds a pupil, but how that support works together to improve the pupil's life.

Section 13

DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE

Building expertise. Strengthening consistent practice.

The quality of inclusion experienced by pupils is inseparable from the quality of the adults around them. Riverside Bridge School therefore regards inclusive practice as a core professional responsibility for every member of staff rather than knowledge held only by specialists.
Our pupils require adults who understand complex communication, adapted SCERTS, sensory and regulation needs, developmental learning, Positive Support, structured teaching, physical and medical access and the deliberate development of independence.

Equally importantly, staff need to understand how these approaches connect. A visual schedule, communication system, sensory strategy or structured workstation has limited value if it is used mechanically without understanding why it is appropriate for the individual pupil.

Teachers have day-to-day responsibility for the quality of learning and provision within their classrooms. This includes knowing pupils well, planning through the appropriate Learning Pathway, establishing accessible communication and environments, directing the adults working in the class and evaluating whether support is producing the intended impact.

The deployment of co-educators is particularly important in a specialist setting. Co-educators provide essential support for communication, learning, regulation, health, personal care and safety. Their proximity to pupils means their practice can significantly influence independence and participation. Our expectation is that co-educators enable rather than replace pupil participation. This requires adults to know when to intervene and when to wait; when to prompt and when to allow processing time; when physical proximity is necessary and when stepping back creates an opportunity for independence; and when changing the environment would be more effective than increasing adult direction.
Teachers therefore have an important role in the day-to-day development of co-educators through modelling, direction, feedback and shared reflection.

Specialist teachers, therapists and other professionals contribute additional expertise. Their work should support individual pupils while also building the capability of classroom teams so that effective strategies become embedded throughout the school week.

Our professional development model therefore combines induction, whole-school training, specialist input, coaching, modelling and classroom follow-up. BridgeWorks, Total Communication, our adapted SCERTS model, Makaton, Positive Support, Learning Pathways, independence and Preparing for Adulthood provide common threads through this development.

Our fortnightly co-educator coaching programme provides a further mechanism for strengthening consistent practice, beginning with areas such as independence, assessment and recording, and effective support.

Quality assurance will consider adult practice as well as pupil outcomes. Learning walks, coaching, observation, curriculum evidence and professional discussion will help leaders identify where practice is secure, where inconsistency remains and where further development is required. Training itself is not the outcome. The outcome is better adult practice resulting in greater communication, participation, learning, belonging and independence for pupils.

Section 14

TRANSITIONS AND CONTINUITY OF INCLUSION

Preparing for change. Maintaining continuity.

Transitions can present significant barriers for pupils with complex SEND.
Change may involve starting at Riverside Bridge School, moving between classrooms, encountering unfamiliar adults, changing timetable or transport arrangements, moving between phases, entering KS5 or preparing to leave school.

For pupils who rely heavily on predictable environments, familiar communication or established relationships, even apparently small changes can significantly affect participation.
Effective transition therefore requires more than providing information shortly before change occurs. It requires understanding what the individual pupil needs in order to anticipate, process and gradually experience that change.

Transition planning should protect continuity in communication, adapted SCERTS-informed approaches, regulation strategies, health and care arrangements, Positive Support and effective learning approaches.

Where appropriate, pupils should be given repeated opportunities to experience new adults, spaces, routes or routines before the transition becomes permanent.

Families play a particularly important role because they can help staff understand how the pupil has responded to change previously and what forms of preparation are likely to be meaningful.

Transitions between professionals and services also require careful management. Information should be purposeful and accessible to the people who need it so that effective practice does not disappear when a pupil moves class or phase.

As pupils approach adulthood, transition becomes increasingly future-focused and must connect education with adult services, community participation, health, relationships, meaningful occupation or employment and independent living as appropriate.

Our aim is not to remove change from pupils' lives. Change is inevitable. Our role is to develop the understanding, communication, regulation and confidence that enable pupils to experience change with increasing security and agency.

Section 15

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2026-2027

Prioritising improvement. Strengthening impact.

Our strategic priorities reflect what we know about our pupils, our existing strengths and the areas where strengthening practice is most likely to improve inclusion. They are deliberately interconnected. Communication supports regulation. Regulation supports participation. Adult practice influences independence. Community experience enables generalisation. Family and professional partnership improves consistency around the pupil. We are therefore not introducing a series of separate initiatives. We are strengthening a coherent model.

Strategic priority	What we will strengthen	Intended impact	How we will know
Communication and agency	Total Communication, adapted SCERTS, communication profiles, Makaton, MRO, assent and meaningful pupil voice.	Pupils increasingly communicate needs, preferences and decisions and influence what happens around them.	Curriculum evidence, communication profiles, specialist evidence, EHCP outcomes and pupil voice.
Independence	BridgeWorks, processing time, prompt reduction, initiation, environmental support and least-help practice.	Reduced unnecessary adult dependency and greater independent participation.	BridgeWorks QA, observations, personalised targets, PfA evidence and review of adult support.
Regulation, participation and belonging	Positive Support, adapted SCERTS regulation approaches, sensory support, relationships and whole-school belonging.	Pupils participate in a wider range of learning and school experiences with increasing confidence and regulation.	Engagement evidence, incident analysis, RPI review, pupil experience and family feedback.
Inclusive teaching and environments	Learning Pathways, Principles for Learning, BridgeWorks and specialist pedagogy.	More consistent, accessible and ambitious teaching across classrooms and adults.	Learning walks, curriculum evidence, coaching and pupil progress.
Equity, dignity and high expectations	Age-respectful provision, pupil agency, meaningful recognition and challenge across all pathways.	Pupils experience greater dignity, aspiration, achievement and contribution.	QA, pupil experience, case studies and curriculum evidence.

Strategic priority	What we will strengthen	Intended impact	How we will know
Community inclusion and adulthood	Purposeful community learning, generalisation, Skills for Life, Enterprise, work-related learning and PfA.	Pupils increasingly apply learning across settings and participate in wider community life.	PfA outcomes, community learning evidence, family feedback and curriculum evidence.
Families and integrated working	Stronger alignment between family aspirations, EHCP outcomes, specialist advice and classroom practice.	More coherent provision around the whole pupil.	EHCP review evidence, family feedback and specialist/classroom review.
Inclusive workforce	Coaching, induction, specialist development and classroom follow-up.	Greater consistency of adult practice and stronger impact on pupil participation.	Coaching records, QA, staff evaluation and pupil outcomes.
External reflection and assurance	Completing our School Belonging Award and SEND Inclusion Award work by the end of October and using feedback within improvement planning.	External challenge strengthens and validates sustainable practice.	External feedback, self-evaluation, action planning and subsequent review.

Section 16

MEASURING IMPACT AND EVALUATING INCLUSION

Measuring impact. Evaluating what changes for pupils.

The purpose of this strategy is not to demonstrate how much provision Riverside Bridge School offers. It is to determine whether provision reduces barriers and improves pupils' lives. No single measure can demonstrate this across such a diverse cohort.

We will therefore use a combination of evidence relating to learning, communication, independence, engagement, participation, regulation, attendance, belonging, relationships and Preparing for Adulthood. Curriculum and personalised target information will show progress towards individual outcomes. BridgeWorks quality assurance will help determine whether environments and adult practice are increasing understanding and independence. Incident and restrictive intervention analysis will help identify whether proactive changes are reducing distress. EHCP and PfA evidence will help us understand longer-term development.

Generalisation will also form an important part of evaluation. A pupil demonstrating a skill with one familiar adult in one familiar environment represents important progress, but our ambition is for skills to become increasingly transferable across adults, settings and situations.

Pupil and family experience will form part of this evidence. For pupils unable to provide conventional verbal feedback, we will use appropriate communication, observation, preference, engagement and participation evidence rather than assuming their views cannot be understood.

The School Belonging Award and SEND Inclusion Award will provide additional external challenge and assurance during 2026-2027. They will not replace the school's own evaluation systems. Their value lies in triangulating our evidence, identifying questions we may not have asked ourselves and providing an external perspective on whether our principles are evident in practice.

The DfE similarly emphasises that evaluation should consider progress in learning, wellbeing, belonging, participation and engagement and should operate as an ongoing process rather than a one-off review. Accreditation or completion of planned actions will therefore never be treated as the final measure of success. The real measure is what changes for pupils.

Section 17

LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Leading collectively. Providing challenge and assurance.

The Headteacher retains overall accountability for ensuring that Riverside Bridge School provides an ambitious, equitable and inclusive education for every pupil.

The Senior Leadership Team shares responsibility for implementing this strategy because inclusion encompasses curriculum, teaching, safeguarding, Positive Support, communication, workforce development, accessibility, family partnership and Preparing for Adulthood.
The Senior Deputy Headteacher will provide strategic oversight of implementation alongside the Headteacher and Assistant Headteachers, ensuring that inclusion priorities connect directly with curriculum development, professional learning and whole-school improvement.

Teachers are responsible for translating the strategy into everyday classroom practice. This includes planning accessible learning, establishing effective communication, creating structured and enabling environments, deploying co-educators effectively, reducing unnecessary adult dependency and evaluating the impact of support.

Co-educators implement agreed approaches consistently and support pupils to participate without replacing opportunities for communication or independence.
Specialists and multidisciplinary professionals contribute additional expertise while working with classroom teams to ensure that relevant recommendations are understood and embedded within everyday practice.

The Governing Board provides strategic challenge and assurance. Governors will consider not only whether planned activity has occurred, but whether barriers are reducing and pupils' experience is improving.

The DfE describes inclusion strategy development as a shared leadership responsibility involving senior leaders, governors, curriculum leaders and other staff. Our model reflects that principle while maintaining clear accountability.

Section 18

REVIEW AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Reviewing impact. Learning and strengthening.

This strategy covers September 2026 to August 2027 and will be formally evaluated annually, with progress monitored throughout the year.
Review will not be limited to whether planned actions have been completed. Leaders and governors will consider whether those actions have produced meaningful changes for pupils.

The autumn term will provide an early external checkpoint through our work towards the School Belonging Award and SEND Inclusion Award. Any areas for development identified through those processes will feed into ongoing school improvement rather than sitting separately as award-related actions.

The annual review will draw together curriculum and EHCP outcomes, communication and independence evidence, BridgeWorks quality assurance, attendance and engagement, incident and restrictive intervention trends, Preparing for Adulthood outcomes, staff development evidence, multidisciplinary information and pupil and family experience.

Where an approach is having demonstrable impact, we will consider how it can be sustained and generalised. Where implementation is inconsistent, we will address the reasons for that inconsistency. Where an approach is not producing the intended impact, we will adapt or discontinue it rather than maintain activity for its own sake.

The DfE describes inclusion strategy development as an ongoing cycle of identifying barriers, using evidence, developing strategy, delivering and monitoring, and evaluating and sustaining effective practice. Future versions of this strategy will therefore evolve in response to our pupils, our own evaluation, external challenge and national developments.

Our measure of success remains straightforward: Are the barriers around our pupils reducing?
If they are, we should see pupils communicating more, participating more, developing greater independence, experiencing stronger belonging, accessing a wider range of opportunities and becoming increasingly able to influence and shape their own lives.