

# DFE UNIVERSAL RISE SUPPORT: INCLUSION AUDIT FRAMEWORK PILOT SECTIONS



Department  
for Education

## Introduction

The Inclusion Exchange Framework has been designed as a practical, research-informed audit tool to support mainstream schools in evaluating and strengthening their provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It brings together the best evidence from national guidance into one coherent framework that helps schools understand what effective, inclusive practice looks like in everyday classrooms.

This framework is for all mainstream school settings: primary, secondary, and all-through. It can be used by school leaders who are committed to improving outcomes and participation for pupils with SEND. It is designed to enable schools to use it as part of ongoing self-evaluation, strategic planning, peer review, or external support processes.

The tool supports schools to reflect honestly on where they are currently using a three-tiers - Establishing Foundations, Strengthening Practice, or Sustaining Excellence across 8 key areas. By breaking down effective inclusive practice into clear, observable elements, the framework helps schools pinpoint strengths, identify priorities for development, and plan meaningful next steps.

Most importantly, this framework places pupils with SEND at the centre. It promotes a whole-school commitment to high-quality teaching, early identification, proactive support, and collaborative working with pupils and families. Used well, it will help schools ensure that every learner is valued, supported, and able to participate and achieve within an ambitious, inclusive curriculum.

## Developing the Inclusion Audit Framework

This framework draws on the original Whole School SEND Review Guide and additional, more recent research-informed guides; in particular the Education Endowment Foundation's SEND in Mainstream Guide and the Education Endowment Foundation's Deployment of Teaching Assistants Guide and the nasen Whole School SEND Reflection Framework. Additional guidance is drawn from the 2025 Ofsted School Inspection Toolkit, with particular focus on the 'Inclusion' element.



## Evaluating Effectiveness

### **Establishing Foundations**

*You are putting the right conditions in place for inclusive practice.*

- *You share a clear commitment to inclusion and ambition for all pupils.*
- *You focus on strong classroom teaching as the starting point for support.*
- *You use assessment to understand what helps or hinders pupils' access to learning.*
- *You are developing a consistent graduated response across the school.*
- *You are building shared understanding of responsibility for pupils with SEND.*

*At this stage, systems are emerging and beginning to align.*

### **Strengthening Practice**

*You are refining and embedding inclusive systems.*

- *You connect classroom practice, additional support and specialist input more deliberately.*
- *You use reflection and evidence to adjust provision over time.*
- *You deploy staff in ways that increasingly promote independence.*
- *You look beyond attainment to understand wider progress and wellbeing.*
- *You invest in professional learning to strengthen inclusive practice.*

*At this stage, practice is more consistent and impact is increasingly visible.*

### **Sustaining Excellence**

*You are sustaining and extending high quality inclusive practice.*

- *You hold a confident and well informed understanding of SEND across the school.*
- *You evaluate provision through its long term impact on pupils' outcomes and independence.*
- *You adapt curriculum and systems proactively as needs change.*
- *You use external expertise to enhance, not replace, internal practice.*
- *You contribute to wider professional learning and system improvement.*

*At this stage, inclusion is embedded, adaptive, and resilient over time.*

## Quality of Teaching & Learning for Pupils with SEND

### Statements

1. **Effective partnerships between leaders and teachers ensures pupils access a breadth of opportunities through an ambitious curriculum, adaptive teaching and evidence based high quality pedagogy and learning environments thus removing barriers to teaching and enabling pupils to achieve their aspirational goals and outcomes**
2. **Effective partnerships and communication systems ensure teachers demonstrate a secure understanding of pupils needs and aspirations**
3. **Teachers use assessment effectively to identify need, address misconceptions and adapt teaching and tasks responsively, including, where appropriate, homework.**
4. **Teachers and teaching assistants work in an effective professional partnership to use evidence-based instructional strategies (including the EEF's 5-a-day approach) to promote access and independence, with support carefully scaffolded rather than simplifying learning.**
5. **Interventions are delivered to a high standard and are well integrated into classroom practice so that learning is sustained, transferred and demonstrating impact.**

| Establishing Foundations  | Strengthening Practice  | Sustaining Excellence  |
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| <p><i>Leaders and teachers are beginning to form working partnerships to support pupils with SEND. There is some intent to provide an ambitious curriculum, but alignment between curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment is inconsistent. Adaptive teaching is evident in pockets of practice, however barriers to learning are not yet identified or addressed systematically across classrooms or subjects.</i></p> <p><i>Communication systems exist to share information about pupils with SEND, but these are variable in quality and consistency. Teachers' understanding of pupils' needs and aspirations is developing, though it is not yet secure or shared across the school. As a result, planning and teaching do not consistently reflect this understanding.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers use assessment to identify need and gaps in learning, but assessment is often separated from day to day teaching. Misconceptions are sometimes identified, though responses are not always timely or precise. Adaptation of teaching, tasks and homework</i></p> | <p><i>Leaders and teachers work in more purposeful and effective partnership to support pupils with SEND. Curriculum ambition is clearer and adaptive teaching is increasingly evident across classrooms. Alignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is improving, though it is not yet consistently strong in all subjects or phases.</i></p> <p><i>Communication systems are more effective and enable teachers to develop a clearer understanding of pupils' needs and aspirations. This information increasingly informs planning and teaching, leading to more coherent classroom practice and improved access to learning for pupils with SEND.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers use assessment more confidently within teaching. They identify misconceptions earlier and adapt teaching, tasks and homework more responsively. Assessment increasingly supports learning over time, though practice is not yet consistently refined or embedded across the school.</i></p> | <p><i>You sustain highly effective and inclusive teaching across the school through strong and purposeful partnerships between leaders and teachers. Curriculum design, adaptive teaching and assessment are tightly aligned, ensuring pupils with SEND access a broad, ambitious curriculum and high quality learning environments. Barriers to learning are systematically removed, enabling pupils to work towards aspirational goals and outcomes without reduced expectation.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders and teachers work in close partnership to refine practice continuously. Communication systems are robust and ensure teachers have a secure, shared understanding of pupils' needs, strengths and aspirations. This understanding consistently informs planning, teaching and classroom decision making, resulting in coherent and responsive provision across subjects and phases.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers use assessment skilfully and routinely within teaching. They identify need early, address misconceptions precisely and adapt teaching and tasks</i></p> |

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| <p><i>is inconsistent and often reactive rather than responsive.</i></p> <p><i>Teaching assistants provide support for pupils with SEND, but their role is not consistently aligned with classroom teaching. Support can unintentionally reduce independence or narrow learning. Interventions are in place but are not consistently integrated with classroom practice or evaluated for impact.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, teaching and learning for pupils with SEND is emerging. Practice varies across the school and systems to secure consistently high quality inclusive teaching are not yet embedded.</i></p> | <p><i>Teaching assistants work more closely with teachers and increasingly use scaffolded support to promote access and independence. Interventions are better planned and more closely linked to classroom learning. Evaluation of impact is developing, though it is not yet consistently rigorous or used to refine practice.</i></p> <p><i>Teaching and learning for pupils with SEND is improving and increasingly consistent. Systems to support high quality inclusive teaching are in place, but further strengthening is needed to ensure practice is sustained and embedded across the whole school.</i></p> | <p><i>responsively, including homework where appropriate. Assessment supports learning in the moment and over time, enabling pupils with SEND to acquire, apply and secure knowledge and skills with increasing independence.</i></p> <p><i>Classroom practice reflects confident and fluent use of evidence based pedagogy. Teaching assistants work as effective professional partners, using carefully scaffolded support to promote access, independence and sustained learning rather than simplifying content. Instructional strategies are consistently applied and well matched to pupils' needs.</i></p> <p><i>Teaching and learning for pupils with SEND is coherent, robust and consistently strong. Systems are in place to sustain high quality practice and continuous improvement. Evidence based inclusive teaching ensures pupils with SEND are well prepared for future transitions and adulthood, securing strong outcomes over time.</i></p> |
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| <p>Case Study/Example</p>  |  |  |
| <p><i>Think, Explore &amp; Thrive</i></p>  | <p><i>This School redesigned its curriculum to ensure every learner accesses a <a href="#">personalised, evidence-informed and ambitious offer</a>. Through clear pathways, robust assessment and consistent communication approaches, teaching is now tightly matched to need. Functional, real-life learning builds independence, improves engagement and strengthens progression, supporting pupils to thrive in school, community and adulthood.</i></p>                 | <p><i>Supporting Artefacts (if applicable)</i></p> |
| <p><i>Independence in Action</i></p>   | <p><i><a href="#">This College</a> strengthened its curriculum, accreditation and work-based learning to improve outcomes for young adults with complex needs. Through structured implementation, specialist collaboration and robust quality assurance, learners now achieve aspirational destinations. The PACE vision is embedded, independence is central, and engagement, attendance and progression remain consistently strong across the provision.</i></p>           |  |
| <p><i>A Progressive, Sequenced Curriculum Driving Strong Outcomes for Pupils with SEND</i></p> | <p><i><a href="#">This School</a> developed a progressive, sequenced Scheme of Work and assessment framework that ensures pupils working below age-related expectations access a coherent, inclusive curriculum. Embedded assessment, adaptive teaching and aligned ILP targets secure meaningful progression. Strong professional development and consistent implementation enable sustained improvement in classroom practice and outcomes for learners with SEND.</i></p> |  |

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| <p><i>Communicate to Connect:<br/>A Whole-School Total<br/>Communication Approach</i></p> | <p><i><a href="#">This School</a> embedded a whole-school total communication approach, ensuring every child can understand, express and participate using personalised, consistent strategies. Staff training, daily modelling and collaboration with families created equitable access to learning and strengthened independence, pupil voice and wellbeing. The approach is now sustained, externally validated and fully embedded across the school.</i></p> |  |
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## Working with Pupils, Parents and Carers of Pupils with SEND

### Statements

1. **The school provides a clear and accessible SEND Information Report, signposting pupils, parents and carers to appropriate advice and support services within the school and locality (including the area local offer). Leaders understand their roles and responsibilities in promoting the local offer to improve experiences and outcomes for learners and families with SEND.**
2. **Systems are in place to ensure parents and carers meaningfully contribute to shaping the quality of support and provision through genuine co-production, including active participation in parent/carers forums and workshops, and involvement as partners in the assess, plan, do, review cycle rather than being informed after decisions are made.**
3. **Communication with pupils, parents and carers is strengths-based and focuses on progress and next steps.**
4. **Pupils feel listened to and heard; they are positive about their learning experience, because school leaders create inclusive, open and safe culture, where the highly skilled staff actively support pupils with SEND to understand and communicate all of their needs and strategies that help them learn.**
5. **The school leaders take into account the view of pupils and their parents and carers, when creating, evaluate and improving a range of opportunities for inclusion, participation and enrichment, for example in pupil voice forums, after school clubs etc.**

| Establishing Foundations  | Strengthening Practice   | Sustaining Excellence   |
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| <p><i>The school has a SEND Information Report in place, but it is not yet consistently clear, accessible or well understood by pupils, parents and carers. Signposting to advice, support services and the local offer is limited or inconsistent. Leaders' understanding of their role in promoting the local offer is developing, and its use to improve experiences and outcomes for families with SEND is not yet secure.</i></p> <p><i>Systems for engaging parents and carers are in place, but they are largely informational rather than collaborative. Parents and carers are usually informed of decisions about support and provision after they have been made. Opportunities for genuine co-production, including meaningful involvement in the assess, plan, do, review cycle, are inconsistent or underdeveloped. As a result, parental confidence and influence are variable.</i></p> <p><i>Communication with pupils, parents and carers focuses primarily on concerns, needs or issues. Strengths,</i></p> | <p><i>The SEND Information Report is clearer and more accessible, and signposting to advice, support services and the local offer is improving. Leaders demonstrate a growing understanding of their responsibility to promote the local offer and to use it to improve experiences for families with SEND, although practice is not yet fully embedded.</i></p> <p><i>Systems for engaging parents and carers are more structured and increasingly purposeful. Parents and carers contribute to discussions about support and provision, and co-production within the assess, plan, do, review cycle is more evident. However, involvement is not yet consistent for all pupils, and leaders continue to refine systems to ensure genuine partnership.</i></p> <p><i>Communication with pupils, parents and carers is increasingly strengths-based. Discussions more routinely focus on progress and next steps, alongside needs. Communication is clearer and more timely,</i></p> | <p><i>The school provides a clear, comprehensive and highly accessible SEND Information Report that is well understood and regularly used by pupils, parents and carers. Information clearly signposts families to appropriate advice, support services and the local offer. Leaders fully understand their statutory and moral responsibility to promote the local offer and do so proactively. This strengthens parental confidence, improves access to support and contributes directly to improved experiences and outcomes for learners with SEND.</i></p> <p><i>Systems for meaningful engagement and co-production with parents and carers are embedded and sustained. Parents and carers are trusted partners in shaping the quality of support and provision. They contribute actively through structured forums, workshops and ongoing dialogue. Co-production is a defining feature of the assess, plan, do, review cycle, with parents and carers involved from the earliest stages of decision making rather than informed after</i></p> |

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| <p><i>progress and next steps are not yet a consistent feature of dialogue. Communication is often reactive and does not always build shared understanding or trust.</i></p> <p><i>Pupils with SEND are supported by staff, but opportunities for pupils to express their views and influence decisions about their learning are uneven. Some pupils do not yet feel fully listened to or confident in communicating their needs. An inclusive and safe culture is emerging, but it is not yet consistently experienced across the school.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders consider pupil and parent views when planning inclusion, participation and enrichment opportunities, but this is informal and inconsistent. Access to pupil voice, clubs and enrichment varies. Leaders do not yet evaluate participation or impact systematically to inform improvement.</i></p> | <p><i>although consistency across the school is still developing.</i></p> <p><i>Pupils with SEND increasingly feel listened to and valued. Staff support pupils to communicate their needs and to understand strategies that help them learn. An inclusive and open culture is evident in many aspects of school life, though it is not yet fully embedded or consistently experienced by all pupils.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders increasingly use the views of pupils and parents and carers to inform inclusion, participation and enrichment opportunities. Access to pupil voice and wider opportunities is improving. Leaders are beginning to evaluate participation and impact, though this is not yet systematic or used consistently to refine provision.</i></p> | <p><i>actions are taken. Leaders evaluate the impact of this partnership on outcomes and refine systems accordingly.</i></p> <p><i>Communication with pupils, parents and carers is consistently strengths-based and purposeful. Dialogue focuses on progress, achievements and clear next steps, rather than deficits or labels. Communication is timely, clear and responsive. This shared language strengthens relationships, builds trust and ensures that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of how support is enabling pupils with SEND to succeed.</i></p> <p><i>Pupils with SEND feel listened to, understood and valued. They are positive about their learning experience and their place within the school community. Highly skilled staff actively support pupils to understand, express and communicate their needs, preferences and the strategies that help them learn and regulate. An inclusive, open and safe culture is embedded across the school, enabling pupils with SEND to participate confidently and authentically.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders systematically seek, value and use the views of pupils and their parents and carers when designing, evaluating and improving opportunities for inclusion, participation and enrichment. Pupil voice structures, clubs, enrichment activities and wider opportunities are accessible and meaningful. Leaders evaluate participation and impact over time to ensure pupils with SEND experience belonging, sustained engagement and positive outcomes within and beyond the classroom.</i></p> |
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| Case Study/Example |  |                                      |
| Partnership Triads | The <a href="#">Partnership Triads</a> strategy strengthens collaboration between school, parents, and SEND learners through improved communication, structured review processes, and a clear policy. By involving families, | Supporting Artefacts (if applicable) |

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|  | using shared digital tools, and promoting pupil voice, the project boosts engagement, builds positive relationships, and helps SEND pupils understand and progress towards their targets.  |  |
| <i>Stronger Together: Building a One-Stop Support Hub for Families of Learners with SEND</i> | The <a href="#">Stronger Together</a> strategy strengthens support for SEND families by hosting multi-agency services on site, guiding parents through complex systems, and improving communication - especially for EAL families. Through drop-ins, coffee afternoons and wide agency partnerships, parents feel supported, needs are identified early, and children receive timely, effective provision that improves outcomes.  |  |
| <i>Genuine Partnerships: Empowering Parents as True SEND Co-Producers</i>                    | The <a href="#">Genuine Partnerships</a> strategy strengthens parent-school partnerships through genuine co-production, giving families an active voice in shaping SEND provision. Using surveys, forums, reviews, workshops and an open-door approach, staff build trust and deepen understanding of each child. Tailored communication boosts parental confidence, improves relationships, and leads to more personalised, effective support for SEND pupils.  |  |
| <i>Warm Transitions, Confident Starts: A Family-Centred SEND Induction Approach</i>          | The <a href="#">Warm Transitions, Confident Starts strategy</a> creates calm, confident transitions for pupils with EHCPs through personalised tours, classroom visits, and open dialogue with families. Parents share key insights early, staff assess needs before admission, and pupils become familiar with routines. The result is stronger communication, well-matched placements, and tailored support from day one.  |  |
| <i>Parent Engagement &amp; Successful Partnerships</i>                                       | This <a href="#">Parent Engagement &amp; Successful Partnerships strategy</a> strengthens parental engagement by building trusting, community-focused relationships with families of pupils with SEMH and complex needs. Through staff training, flexible workshops, accessible communication, proactive Early Help, and inclusive community events, the school reduces barriers, increases parental confidence, and fosters meaningful collaboration. Families feel understood, supported, and more willing to engage, resulting in stronger partnerships and improved outcomes for pupils. |  |