



SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY POLICY

Date: Sept 2026	Next review: Sept 2027
Ratified by: Megan McNamara	

1. Policy statement

Susi Earnshaw Theatre School is committed to providing an inclusive academic and vocational education in which every pupil is valued, supported to participate and encouraged to achieve their potential. We recognise that pupils may experience barriers to learning for many reasons and that some pupils will have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

As an independent mainstream school, we will meet our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Independent School Standards. We use the principles of the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years to inform good practice and will work constructively with pupils, parents/carers, local authorities and relevant professionals.

2. Scope and legal framework

This policy applies to all pupils, teaching staff, support staff and school leaders. It should be read alongside the school's:

- Admissions Policy;
- Equal Opportunities Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions arrangements;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Complaints Procedure.

The policy is informed by:

- the Equality Act 2010;
- the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, where applicable;
- the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (January 2015);
- the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended;
- current Department for Education guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions and safeguarding; and
- current Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations on access arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

3. Definitions

A pupil has special educational needs (SEN) where they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A pupil has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age.

Special educational provision is provision that is additional to or different from that generally made for pupils of the same age. Disability has the meaning given by the Equality Act 2010: a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. A pupil may be disabled without having SEN, and may have SEN without being disabled.

4. Aims and principles

The school aims to:

- identify possible SEND and barriers to learning promptly and accurately;
- place pupils and their parents/carers at the centre of decisions about support;
- maintain high expectations and secure full access to a broad, balanced academic and vocational curriculum;
- provide high-quality teaching, reasonable adjustments and targeted support;
- review support regularly using clear evidence of progress and pupil experience;
- promote independence, wellbeing, participation and successful preparation for the next stage of education; and
- work effectively with external professionals and local authorities where this is appropriate and agreed.

5. Roles and responsibilities

The Proprietor

The Proprietor has overall responsibility for ensuring that the school meets its legal and regulatory duties, that this policy is implemented and reviewed, and that appropriate resources are considered and deployed.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for the school's overall SEND provision, inclusive culture, staffing and deployment of resources, and for ensuring that the curriculum and school life are accessible to pupils with SEND.

The SEND Coordinator (SENCO)

The school's SENCO is: Megan McNamara. The SENCO will:

- coordinate the day-to-day operation of this policy and provision for pupils with SEND;
- advise and support staff in identifying needs, planning support and reviewing impact;
- maintain accurate and appropriately confidential SEND records;
- liaise with pupils, parents/carers, previous and next settings, local authorities and external professionals;
- coordinate arrangements for pupils with EHC plans and contribute to reviews where required;
- work with the examinations officer on access arrangements and reasonable adjustments; and
- report to the Headteacher and Proprietor on the effectiveness of SEND provision and staff development needs.

All teaching and support staff

Every teacher is responsible and accountable for the progress, participation and development of pupils in their classes, including where pupils receive additional support. Staff must:

- know and follow the strategies, reasonable adjustments and plans shared with them;
- use high-quality, adaptive teaching and monitor pupils' response;
- raise concerns promptly with the SENCO and contribute evidence to assessment and review; and
- maintain confidentiality and share information only with those who need it to support the pupil or keep them safe.

6. Identification of need

The four broad areas of need described in the SEND Code of Practice are:

- communication and interaction;
- cognition and learning;
- social, emotional and mental health difficulties; and
- sensory and/or physical needs.

These categories help the school plan support but do not define the whole pupil. Needs may overlap and can change over time. The school will consider the pupil's strengths, views, circumstances and academic and vocational demands, including rehearsals, performances, movement work, changing arrangements and sensory aspects of the theatre-school environment.

Possible SEND may be identified through:

- information from the pupil, parents/carers, previous school or professionals;
- admissions and transition information;
- teachers' assessment, observation and concerns;
- patterns in attainment, progress, attendance, behaviour, wellbeing or participation;
- screening or specialist assessment where appropriate;
- a change in the pupil's presentation or ability to access academic or vocational learning.

Slow progress or low attainment does not automatically mean that a pupil has SEN. Equally, attainment in line with age-related expectations does not rule out SEN. Difficult behaviour, English as an additional language, attendance concerns, being looked after or previously looked after, family circumstances, medical needs or being highly able do not by themselves establish SEN. The school will consider whether any of these factors, safeguarding concerns or unmet learning needs are contributing and will respond through the appropriate policy and support route.

7. The graduated approach: assess, plan, do, review

Where a concern is identified, the school will use a proportionate graduated approach:

Assess: Gather and analyse information from the pupil, parents/carers, staff, previous records and, where appropriate, professionals. The assessment will consider strengths, needs, barriers, baseline information and the pupil's response to previous support.

Plan: Agree intended outcomes, support, adjustments, responsibilities, review measures and a review date. The pupil and parents/carers will be involved and the plan will be shared with staff who need to implement it.

Do: The class or subject teacher remains responsible for the pupil. Agreed strategies and provision are implemented consistently, with the SENCO supporting and monitoring staff as required.

Review: Evaluate the quality and impact of support against the agreed outcomes, drawing on the pupil's and parents'/carers' views. Support will be continued, adjusted, stepped up or ended in light of the evidence.

Where special educational provision is required, the pupil may be recorded on the school's SEND register and an individual support plan or equivalent record will be maintained. Inclusion on, or removal from, the register will be based on evidence and discussed with the pupil and parents/carers. The register is an internal working document and is not a diagnosis.

8. Provision and reasonable adjustments

Support will be matched to identified need and may include:

- adaptive teaching, accessible resources and changes to classroom or studio practice;
- targeted individual or small-group teaching;
- support with communication, literacy, numeracy, organisation, study skills or social and emotional needs;
- pastoral or mentoring support;
- assistive technology, specialist equipment or auxiliary aids;
- adaptations to practical and vocational activities, while maintaining essential learning and safety requirements;

- advice, assessment or intervention from an appropriately qualified external professional; and
- examination access arrangements where the published criteria are met.

The school will take reasonable steps to avoid disabled pupils being placed at a substantial disadvantage. Reasonable adjustments will be considered in advance where possible and will be kept under review. Decisions will be individual, evidence-based and made in consultation with the pupil and parents/carers. The school will not charge a disabled pupil or their parents/carers for a reasonable adjustment or auxiliary aid that the school is legally required to provide.

Any optional private tuition or additional service outside the school's agreed provision will be discussed separately and its purpose and cost made clear in advance. It will not be presented as a substitute for a reasonable adjustment the school is required to make.

9. Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans

Where needs are severe, complex or persistent and cannot reasonably be met through the support available, the school may discuss with parents/carers whether an EHC needs assessment should be requested from the local authority. Parents/carers and young people also have the right to make a request directly.

Where a pupil has an EHC plan, the school will cooperate with the relevant local authority, contribute to reviews and deliver provision that the school has agreed to provide. Funding and contractual arrangements will be clarified before admission or when a plan is issued or amended. If parents/carers arrange an independent-school placement privately, the local authority's responsibilities depend on the individual plan and whether it has agreed and named the placement.

10. Admissions and transition

The school will not unlawfully discriminate against a prospective pupil because of disability. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for the admissions and audition process. Parents/carers are asked to provide full and accurate information about SEND, disability, medical or pastoral needs, current support and any EHC plan so that needs and reasonable adjustments can be considered properly.

Admission is considered under the Admissions Policy and Parent Contract. Before offering or confirming a place, the school may seek information from the current setting and relevant professionals and discuss whether it can provide a suitable academic and vocational education with reasonable adjustments.

When a pupil joins or leaves, the SENCO will coordinate the timely transfer of relevant information, seek the pupil's and parents'/carers' views, and plan support for a smooth transition. Safeguarding records will be transferred separately in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

11. Medical needs, mental health and safeguarding

A medical condition or mental health difficulty does not automatically mean that a pupil has SEN, but it may amount to a disability and may also create special educational needs. The school will coordinate educational, pastoral, medical and safeguarding responses so that responsibilities are clear and support is not delayed.

Pupils with SEND can face additional safeguarding risks, including communication barriers, bullying, isolation, online harm and assumptions that indicators of abuse relate to a condition or disability. Staff must follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and report any concern to the DSL without delay.

12. Examination access arrangements

The school will identify and consider possible examination access arrangements as early as practicable.

Arrangements are not awarded solely because a pupil has a diagnosis, an EHC plan or a particular test score. They must reflect the candidate's current needs, normal way of working and the evidence required by the current JCQ regulations.

The SENCO and examinations officer will work with teaching staff and appropriately qualified assessors. The school will set and communicate internal deadlines, retain required evidence and make applications or centre-delegated decisions in accordance with the regulations in force for the relevant examination series. Pupils and parents/carers should share relevant evidence promptly, but responsibility for compliant centre arrangements rests with the school.

13. Working with pupils and parents/carers

The school values the knowledge and views of pupils and parents/carers. They will be involved, in an age-appropriate way, in identifying barriers, agreeing outcomes, planning and reviewing support, and preparing for transition. Information will be communicated clearly and without unnecessary jargon.

Parents/carers should raise concerns early, provide relevant reports and changes in circumstances, attend review discussions and support agreed strategies where appropriate. The school will explain what provision it can make, what may require external assessment or funding, and who is responsible for each action.

14. External agencies

With appropriate consent, and subject to safeguarding and information-sharing duties, the school may seek advice or support from services such as educational psychology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, health services, mental health services, SEND advisory services and the local authority. Involvement of an external professional does not by itself establish SEN; recommendations will be considered alongside school evidence and the pupil's needs and circumstances.

15. Record keeping and confidentiality

SEND records will be accurate, relevant, securely stored and available to staff who need the information to carry out their role. Records may include concerns, assessments, plans, adjustments, reviews, professional reports, EHC plan documentation and correspondence. Information will be shared lawfully and proportionately in accordance with data-protection requirements and the school's privacy information.

16. Staff development

The Headteacher and SENCO will identify training and guidance needed to support inclusive practice. This may include whole-school development, role-specific training and advice relating to an individual pupil. Staff are expected to engage with training and implement agreed strategies consistently.

17. Concerns and complaints

Parents/carers should normally raise concerns first with the relevant teacher or the SENCO so that they can be addressed promptly. If the matter is not resolved, it should be raised with the Headteacher. A formal complaint may be made under the school's published Complaints Procedure, which includes the stages and timescales required by the Independent School Standards.

Disagreement about a local authority's decision concerning an EHC needs assessment or EHC plan follows the statutory routes explained by the local authority, which may include mediation and appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability). Claims of disability discrimination in schools may also fall within the Tribunal's jurisdiction. The school will signpost families to the relevant local SEND Information, Advice and Support Service where appropriate.

18. Monitoring and review

The SENCO will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy through provision records, review information, pupil and parent/carer feedback, staff discussion and patterns in progress, participation, attendance and wellbeing. The Headteacher will report significant issues to the Proprietor. This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if legislation, guidance or the school's circumstances change.

Key reference documents

- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>
- Equality Act 2010: advice for schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>
- Independent School Standards guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulating-independent-schools>
- JCQ access arrangements and reasonable adjustments: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-reasonable-adjustments/>