Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy

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Contributors	Rob Arrowsmith		
Mandatory Policy	Yes		
Note	This policy must not be amended without prior approval of the Education Director		

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1. Supporting Documents

This policy connects to the Accessibility Plan, the EAL policy (EDU.POL.046), the More Able Pupils policy (EDU.POL.041), the Curriculum, SMSC and Fundamental British Values policy (EDU.POL.008), the Behaviour policy (EDU.POL.027), the Positive Handling and Restrictive Interventions policies, the Safeguarding and Mental Health and Wellbeing policies (EDU.POL.037), and the Complaints policy (EDU.POL.034).

Related policies are held within RADAR in the School's policy folder.

2. Introduction

At Acorns School, we are a specialist setting and the great majority of our pupils have special educational needs or disabilities. Many arrive having found earlier settings hard to manage, often with social, emotional and mental health needs alongside other difficulties. We provide a safe, nurturing and therapeutic environment built around each pupil, so they can settle, learn and make progress from their own starting point.

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This policy sets out how we identify, assess, plan for and support pupils with SEND, how we work with parents, carers and other professionals, and how we make sure every pupil can access a broad and ambitious curriculum.

3. Aim & Scope

This policy applies to all staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers, and visitors at Acorns School. It aims to:

- Ensure the early and accurate identification, assessment and review of pupils' special educational needs.
- Set out how we plan and deliver high-quality, personalised provision through the graduated approach.
- Explain how we meet our duties to pupils with an Education, Health and Care plan.
- Make clear how we work in partnership with pupils, families and other agencies.
- Show how we remove barriers to learning and make reasonable adjustments so every pupil can take part fully.

4. Abbreviations and Definitions

- Special educational needs. A pupil has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision, meaning provision different from or additional to that normally available to pupils of the same age.
- Disability. Under 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.
- Education, Health and Care plan. A legal document, maintained by the local authority, that sets out a child or young person's needs and the provision required to meet them.
- Graduated approach. The four-part cycle of assess, plan, do and review, through which we match support to need and refine it over time.
- SENCo. The special educational needs coordinator, the member of staff responsible for the day-to-day operation of SEND provision.

5. Policy Content

5.1 Principles and Approach

Our approach rests on the following principles.

- High expectations for all. SEND is never a reason to lower ambition. We expect every pupil to progress.
- Adapted, not narrowed. We adapt teaching and support so pupils can access learning, rather than removing learning from them.
- Relational and trauma informed. We understand behaviour as communication and build provision on safe, trusting relationships, in line with the Keys Connect model.
- The pupil at the centre. We seek and act on pupil voice at every stage of planning and review.

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- Partnership. We work openly with parents, carers, the local authority, health and care professionals.
- Preparation for adulthood. Our provision is pointed at independence, communication, life skills and successful transitions.

5.2 SEND Provision in Practice

Identifying special educational needs

We identify needs as early as possible, drawing on information from previous settings, the EHC plan, assessment on entry, staff observations, and the views of the pupil and their family. We recognise the four broad areas of need set out in the SEND Code of Practice. These are communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health, and sensory or physical needs. Many of our pupils have needs across more than one area.

The graduated approach

We use the graduated approach of assess, plan, do and review. We assess each pupil's needs, plan the right support with the pupil and family, put that support in place, and review its impact, refining provision over time. This cycle runs alongside the statutory processes for pupils with an EHC plan.

Education, Health and Care plans and annual reviews

For pupils with an EHC plan, we deliver the provision set out in the plan and review progress against its outcomes. We hold a statutory annual review at least once every twelve months, or more often for younger children or where needs change, and we work with the local authority on any amendments. Pupils and families are central to the review.

The Team Around a Child

At Acorns School, we use a Team Around a Child approach. This multi-agency team, chaired by the SENCo, may include teaching and support staff, parents and carers, the pupil where appropriate, social workers, health professionals and the local authority. It reviews progress, agrees targets and shapes provision.

Meeting frequency and review expectations are determined by need and risk.

Curriculum access and adaptation

Every pupil receives a broad and balanced curriculum, adapted to their needs through differentiation, in-class support, small-group and individual work. For pupils with the most complex needs, the curriculum is personalised to develop communication, independence and life skills, using assistive technology, sensory resources and alternative communication where appropriate.

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Working with parents and carers

We keep open and regular communication with parents and carers through meetings, reports and informal contact, and we support them to take part in planning and decisions. Concerns about SEND provision are handled through the school's Complaints Policy, and we signpost families to the local authority SEND information, advice and support services.

Transitions

We plan carefully for transitions, including entry to the school, moves between key stages, and the move to post-16 education, training or employment. Transition planning is built into annual reviews and prepares pupils and families for the next step.

SEND, behaviour and restrictive interventions

We recognise that pupils with SEND can be over-represented in behaviour incidents and in the use of restrictive interventions, and we work to understand and reduce this. Behaviour is supported through relational and trauma-informed practice and through each pupil's plan. Where a physical intervention is used, it is recorded in line with our positive handling and restrictive interventions arrangements, and a pupil's SEND status is captured as part of that recording. This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour, Positive Handling and Restrictive Interventions policies.

SEND and safeguarding

Pupils with SEND can face additional safeguarding risks, and communication or other barriers can make those risks harder to spot. Staff are alert to this, do not assume that signs of abuse relate only to a pupil's SEND, and act on any concern through the safeguarding procedures. We pay particular attention to mental health, to early help, and to sharing the right information when a pupil joins or moves on. This policy should be read alongside the Safeguarding and Mental Health and Wellbeing policies (EDU.POL.037).

English as an additional language and more able pupils

Having English as an additional language is not a special educational need. We assess language need separately from SEND so that pupils are not wrongly identified as having SEN, and we support pupils with EAL through the EAL policy (EDU.POL.046). We also hold high expectations for pupils who are more able, including those whose ability sits alongside SEND, and stretch them through the More Able Pupils policy (EDU.POL.041). This policy should be read alongside both.

5.3 Recording, Monitoring and Reporting

SEND records, including EHC plans, individual plans and review notes, are held securely on Arbor and kept up to date. Leaders monitor the impact of provision

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through progress data, wellbeing indicators and review outcomes, and report to the proprietor and governors at least termly.

5.4 Equality, Inclusion and Accessibility

At Acorns School, this policy is applied fairly and without discrimination, in line with the Equality Act 2010. We make reasonable adjustments so pupils with SEND can take part fully, and we monitor outcomes for different groups and act to remove disadvantage. This policy is aligned with our three-year accessibility plan, which sets out how we improve access to the curriculum, the physical environment and information over time.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Pupils

Pupils take part in setting and reviewing their own targets, and share their views about what helps them learn.

6.2 Staff

Staff teach pupils with SEND well, adapt their teaching, and follow each pupil's plan. Staff contribute to assessment, planning and review, and keep accurate records of progress.

6.3 The SENCo

The SENCo leads the day-to-day operation of SEND provision and the statutory processes for pupils with an EHC plan. The SENCo coordinates assessment, planning and annual reviews, liaises with the local authority and other agencies, and supports and develops colleagues in their work with pupils with SEND.

While independent schools are not legally required to appoint a qualified SENCo, at Acorns School we ensure SEND provision is led by a suitably experienced SENCo or equivalent specialist.

6.4 Leadership

Leadership at Acorns School makes sure this policy is implemented effectively, that staff are trained and resourced, and that SEND provision is monitored and improved. Leaders monitor attendance, suspensions, exclusions, restrictive interventions and safeguarding concerns affecting pupils with SEND alongside educational outcomes.

6.5 Governance

The proprietor and governors at Acorns School hold the school to account for the quality and impact of SEND provision and for compliance with the relevant duties, monitoring through reports, visits and scrutiny of evidence.

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6.6 Parents and carers

Parents and carers are active partners in planning and review, are kept informed, and are supported to contribute their knowledge of their child.

6.7 Named leads

Acorns School Marple

The SENCo at Acorns School is Kerry Bernard.

Acorns School Ashley

The SENCo at Acorns Ashley School is Sarah Booth.

7. Training Requirements

SEND, including the graduated approach and supporting pupils with SEMH needs, is covered in staff induction at Acorns School and refreshed regularly. The SENCo and staff receive ongoing development covering current SEND practice, trauma-informed approaches and legislative updates.

8. Equality Impact Statement

All policies will be developed and implemented in a manner that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all individuals. Policies must align with relevant equality legislation and reflect the expectations and standards set by our regulatory bodies. They will demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of those we support, as well as our workforce.

9. Sources of Information / References

This policy reflects current statutory guidance and legislation, including:

- The Children and Families Act 2014, Part 3, which sets out duties towards children and young people with SEND.
- The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (DfE and Department of Health, 2015), the statutory guidance we follow.
- The Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments and the duty to have a written, three-year accessibility plan.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the standards on the welfare, health and safety of pupils and on information provided.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025, and 2026 from 1 September 2026), under which pupils with SEND may need additional support and are recognised as potentially more vulnerable.
- The schools we work with sit across different inspectorates. This policy is grounded in the underlying duties, which are common across them. Where the inspecting body needs to be named, our school is inspected by Ofsted.
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10. Version Control

This document can also be found in Radar. This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes. The named owner for review at Acorns School is the headteacher.

11. Appendices

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11.1 Appendix A: School-Specific Annex

At Acorns School Marple, the following local arrangements apply:

- SENCo: Kerry Bernard
- Local authority SEN departments can be reached on:
- sen@stockport.gov.uk
- senat@tameside.gov.uk
- senteameast@cheshireeast.gov.uk
- Sen.admin@derbyshire.gov.uk

- The school's accessibility plan can be found in our accessibility policy and is available on request from admin.acorns@keyseducation.ac.uk

- Local SEND Information, Advice and Support Service contact details:
- https://www.stockport.gov.uk/landing/send-local-offer

- SENDIASS Stockport can be reached on:
- Stockportsendiass@togethertrust.co.uk

- School Team Around the Child meetings are held twice a year.

At Acorns School Ashley the following local arrangements apply:

- SENCo: Sarah Booth
- Local authority and link SEND officer: Cheshire East Natalie Shaul
- SEND Information, Advice and Support Service contact details: Cheshire East Information Advice and Support - http://www.ceias.cheshireeast.gov.uk/
- Local Team Around a Child arrangements and meeting cycle: Cheshire East Early Help - https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/are-you-concerned-about-a-child/cheshire-east-consultation-service-checs/early-help-brokerage.aspx
- The school's accessibility plan can be found in our accessibility policy and is available on request from admin.ashley@keyseducation.ac.uk

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