Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Policy 2026

This Policy applies to all academies within the Link Academy Trust.

This policy was developed by the Link Academy Trust and pays due regard to;

- The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, July 2015
- Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations

Trustees responsible for SEND:	Standards and Curriculum Committee
CEO:	Rachael Sharpe
Trust Inclusion Partner:	Vicki Gillon

Academy Heads/SENDCos:

Academy	**Academy Head/ Executive head**	**SBSL (Academy Based SEND Lead)**	**Fully qualified SENDCo**	**Link Academy Cluster**
Bearnes	Tracy Hoare	Sam Curtis	Sam Curtis	Moorland
Branscombe	Pete Halford	Vicki Gillon	Vicki Gillon	East
Broadhembury	Jen Tierney	Vicki Gillon	Vicki Gillon	East
Broadhempston	Karen Barlow	Rosina Kellman	Rosina Kellman	South
Cheriton Bishop	Alex Cross	Karen Sachon	Karen Sachon	Mid
Diptford	Kate Wilson	Rosina Kellman	Rosina Kellman	South
Drakes	Pete Halford	Jasmine Brown	Vicki Gillon	East
Farway	Jen Tierney	Vicki Gillon	Vicki Gillon	East
Harbertonford	Jack Pemberton	Keiran Gillard	Kieran Gillard	South
Hennock	Anthony Arnold	Maugan Collins	Maugan Collins	Moorland
Ilsington	Kat Williams	Nicole Willis	Nicole Willis	Moorland
Landscove	Natalie Last	Rosina Kellman	Rosina	South

				Kellman	
	Littleham	Ashleigh Tubbs	Alyssa Lee	Alyssa Lee	East
	Morchard Bishop	Hannah Bancroft	Helen Dodge	Helen Dodge	Mid
	Moretonhampstead	Alex Waterman	Anna Neville	Alex Waterman	Moorland
	Otterton	Anne Pelosi	Vicki Gillon	Vicki Gillon	East
	Sparkwell	Tom Cole	Niamh Templar	Tom Cole	South
	Stoke Gabriel	Alice Eeles	Rosina Kellman	Rosina Kellman	South
	Tedburn St Mary	Louise Warren	Rosina Kellman	Rosina Kellman	Mid
	Widecombe	Anthony Arnold	Ella Thompson	Vicki Gillon	Moorland
	Woodbury Salterton	Gillian Pyle	Vicki Gillon	Vicki Gillon	East
	Wolborough	Tracy Hoare	Sam Curtis	Sam Curtis	Moorland
	Yeoford	Christian Martin	Rosina Kellman	Rosina Kellman	Mid

This policy will be reviewed annually and is subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees. Individual Academies will publish a SEN Information Report.

Rationale

The Link Academy Trust will do its best to ensure that the necessary provision is made for any pupil who has special educational needs or disabilities. We will ensure that all staff in the academy are able to identify and provide for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to enable pupils with SEND to join in the activities of the academy.

Many children will have an additional need at some time in their school life, sometimes for a short time or sometimes long term and we will not view this as a deficit model. We provide all children with Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision (OAIP) to ensure their individual needs are met. Some pupils will need something ***additional to*** and ***different from*** what is provided for the majority; this is special educational provision (Targeted or Specialist) and we will use our best endeavours to ensure that provision is made for those who need it.

Teaching and supporting pupils with SEND is therefore a whole school responsibility requiring a whole school response. Meeting the needs of pupils with SEND requires partnership working between all those involved – the Local Authority (LA), Link Academy Trust, the academy, parents/carers, pupils, children's services and all other agencies.

The staff and local board members/trustees of The Link Academy Trust will also work to ensure that all pupils with SEND reach their full potential, are fully included within the school community and are able to make successful transitions between educational establishments. This policy aims to support all members of staff in providing positive whole school approaches through our Graduated Approach Pathway (see appendix 1) towards the learning, progress and achievement of pupils with SEND.

This policy is in line with our teaching and learning policy, Disability Equality Scheme, Safeguarding policy, behaviour policy and exclusions policy and aims to support inclusion for all of our children. The responsibility for the management of this policy falls to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO); the day-to-day operation of the policy is the responsibility of the Executive/Academy Heads, school-based SEND leads (SBSL) or Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinators (SENDCo), supported by the Trust Inclusion Partner. The Local Boards, Executive Academy Heads and the Academy Heads/SENDCo will work together closely to ensure that this policy is working effectively.

Aims

To provide the structure for a pupil-centred process that engages pupil, family, academy and other professionals in planning for and implementing high quality, needs led provision that is consistent across the academy. This is to ensure all of our pupils are able to access the same opportunities for learning and social development achieving maximum progress, fulfilling their potential and promoting their well-being.

Objectives

The SEND Policy of the Link Academy Trust reflects the principles of the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice (2015). The aims of this Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy are to:

- Ensure the Equality Act 2010 duties for pupils with disabilities are met,
- To enable pupils with special educational needs to have their needs met,
- To take into account the views of the pupils with special educational needs,
- To facilitate full access to a broad, balanced and relevant education, including an appropriate curriculum for the foundation stage and the National Curriculum, for pupils with special educational needs,
- In conjunction with the Medical Policy, make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions and to have regard to statutory guidance supporting pupils at the academy with medical conditions,
- To implement the graduated approach to meeting the needs of pupils using the Assess, Plan, Do, Review process,
- Develop a culture of inclusion valuing high quality teaching for all learners, with teachers using a range of effective adaptive teaching methods,
- Employ a collaborative approach and genuine partnership with learners with a SEN or disability, their families, staff within school and other external agencies including those from Health and Social Care,
- Set appropriate individual learning outcomes based on prior attainment, high aspirations and the views of the learner and family,
- Share expertise and good practice across the academy and Trust, taking latest research and evidence into consideration
- Make efficient and effective use of academy resources,
- Have regard to the Code of Practice (2015) for the identification, assessment, support and review of special educational needs,

Identifying and supporting Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

Definition of SEND

Pupils have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special education provision to be made for him/her namely provision ***which is additional to or different from*** that normally available in a differentiated curriculum. The Link Academy Trust regards pupils as having a Special Educational Need if they:

a) Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of pupils of the same age, or;
b) Have a disability which prevents or hinders him/her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions
c) A child under compulsory age has special educational needs if they fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them (Section 20 Children and Families Act 2014)

Pupils must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught.

The Link Academy Trust will have regard to the SEND Code of Practice 2015 when carrying out its duties towards all pupils with SEND and ensure that parents/carers are informed by the individual academies that SEND provision is being made for their child.

There may be times in a pupil's school career when they are identified as having a Special Educational Need. These pupils will be provided with intervention and/or support that is 'additional to or different from' the normal differentiated curriculum supported by high quality teaching. This may be on an ongoing basis or for a limited time. Many pupils with sensory and/or physical disabilities may require adaptations, made as reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

Areas of Special Educational Need

Under the SEND Code of Practice 2015 pupils identified as having a special educational need (SEN) will be considered within one or more of the following categories of need:

- Cognition and Learning; for example, dyslexia and dyspraxia

- Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties; for example, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

- Communication and Interaction needs; for example, autistic spectrum disorder or speech and language difficulties including Developmental Language Disorder.

- Sensory and/or Physical needs; for example; visual impairments, hearing impairments, processing difficulties and epilepsy

How we identify and support pupils with SEN

The progress made by all pupils is regularly monitored and reviewed. Initially, concerns registered by teachers, parents/carers or other agencies are addressed by appropriate adaptations within the classroom and a record is kept of strategies used on the provision map. This can be then used in later discussions if concerns persist.

All pupils' attainment and achievements are monitored by their teacher who is required to provide Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision (OAIP), adapted as required for individual pupils. Where a pupil is making inadequate progress or falls behind their peers, additional support will be provided under the guidance of the class teacher with support from the academy based SENDCo if;

- Progress is significantly slower than that of their peers starting from the same baseline
- Progress fails to match or better the child's previous rate of progress
- Attainment does not close the gap between the child and their peers
- The attainment gap widens

This may include progress in areas other than attainment, for example, social and emotional needs.

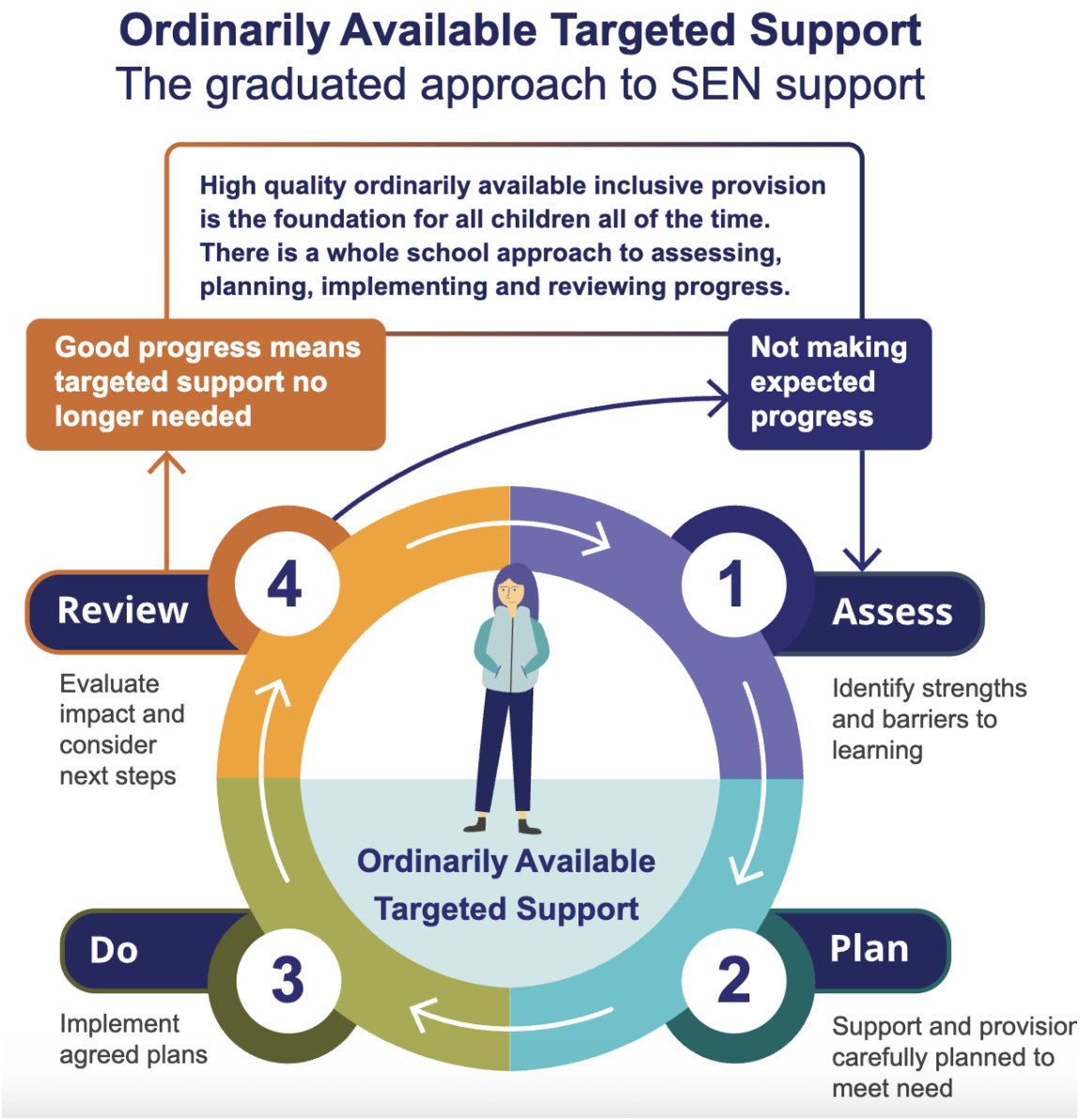
Slow progress and low attainment will not automatically mean a pupil is recorded as having SEND.

Where pupils continue to make inadequate progress despite support and Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision, the class teacher will work with the academy's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo) to assess if a pupil has a significant learning difficulty and agree appropriate support.

When deciding whether special educational provision is required, we will start with the desired outcomes, including the expected progress and attainment, and the views and the wishes of the pupil and their parents/carers. We will use this to determine the support that is needed and whether we can provide it by adapting our core offer, or whether something different or additional is needed.

The Graduated Approach

Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, we will take action to support effective learning by removing barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This **SEND support** will take the form of a four-part cycle through which earlier decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised with a growing understanding of the pupil's needs and of what supports the pupil in making good progress and securing good outcomes. This is known as **the graduated approach – assess, plan, do, review.**



For pupils with low level special educational needs the cycle of **Assess, Plan, Do** and **Review** will fit into the regular termly assessment and planning cycle for all pupils. These are known as Pupil Progress Meetings. For those pupils with more complex needs or for whom a more frequent cycle needs to be employed additional meeting dates will be set and will include the termly Pupil Progress Meetings.

When a pupil has made sufficient progress in their area of need that they no longer require any provision that is ***different from*** or ***additional to*** that which is normally available as part of high quality and differentiated teaching they will no longer be seen as requiring SEN Support. At this point, through discussion and agreement with parents/carers the pupil will be removed from the schools Inclusion register.

Statutory Assessment of Needs (EHC)

Where, despite the academy having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities of the pupil, the child has not made expected progress, the school or parents/carers should consider requesting an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment. The evidence gathered through regular review of the Graduated Approach, Provision Maps, external professional reports and TAF (Team Around the Family) meetings will help the Local Authority (LA) in determining when this statutory assessment of needs is required.

Where a pupil has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the Local Authority must review the plan every twelve months as a minimum. Schools have a duty to co-operate so schools will hold annual review meetings on the behalf of Devon LA (or in some of our academies Plymouth or Torbay LA) and complete the appropriate paperwork for this process. Some pupils require more specialised attention than we can offer and may attend schools with a focus on SEND, where they receive more targeted assistance from professionals trained in specific areas, such as speech and language therapy, a physical disability or complex SEMH needs. These schools often provide a more structured environment with a higher level of resources and support. Across Devon there are also Resource bases which are a stepping stone between mainstream and specialist provision and at times we may request a placement in a base. At Littleham Primary School we have a CAIRB which is a resource base funded by the LA for children with a communication or interaction need.

Alternative Provision

At times there may be pupils who require Alternative Provision (AP). This is defined as education arranged for compulsory school-age children who cannot attend mainstream school due to reasons such as permanent exclusion, fixed-period exclusion, illness, or health issues. It can also be arranged by schools to provide education off-site, to help improve a pupil's behaviour. AP settings vary and can include specialist AP schools, academies, or arrangements with other educational or therapeutic providers, often funded by the local authority. We follow the DfE's Arranging Alternative Provision guide (February 2025) when making this choice and ensure we carry out the necessary safeguarding and compliance checks before making this decision, see further details in the Trust's safeguarding policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation of SEND

Pupil progress is tracked with assessments recorded termly. Where pupils are not making sufficient progress additional information is sought and appropriate action taken. Additional assessments may be carried out.

We evaluate the effectiveness of provision for pupils with SEN and disabilities by:

- Reviewing pupils' individual progress towards their goals each term, seeking parent and pupil voice regarding their views
- Reviewing the impact of interventions
- Monitoring by the SENDCo
- Using provision maps to measure progress. These are reviewed and written on the half term.

- Holding annual reviews for pupils with EHC plans

Additional training, advice and support will be provided to teaching staff where necessary in order to facilitate pupil progress and to meet pupil needs.

Supporting Pupils and Families

We value and accept the positive role and contribution parents/carers can make. We make every effort to work in full co-operation with parents/carers, recognising and respecting their roles and responsibilities. Parents/carers are encouraged to work with the academy and other professionals to ensure that their child's needs are identified properly and met as early as possible.

At the Link Academy Trust, we endeavour to support parents/carers so that they are able to:

- Feel supported and taken seriously should they raise a concern about their child
- Recognise and fulfil their responsibilities and play an active and valued role in their child's education
- Understand procedures and documentation
- Make their views known about how their child is educated
- Have access to information, advice and support during assessment and any related decision-making process about special educational provision.

Parents/carers of a child with SEND support will have the opportunity to meet with the class teacher at least three times each year to review progress. The SENDCo may meet with parents/carers, with prior arrangement, whenever possible.

Parents/carers are encouraged to seek help and advice from Independent Information Advice and Support services, including Devon Parent Partnership (DPP). These are able to provide impartial and independent advice, support and information on special educational needs and disabilities.

Parents/carers are also encouraged to visit the Devon County Council Local Offer website www.devon.gov.uk/send. This website provides valuable information about different agencies, services and resources for children, young people with SEND and their families in addition to academy resources and information. In the case of any complaint, parents/carers will be directed to the Trust's Complaints Policy.

Partnership with External Agencies

The Trust is supported by a wide range of different agencies and teams. The individual academy SEND Information report details which agencies the academy has worked with in the last 12 months. This report can be found on the individual school websites and is up-dated annually.

Transition
We endeavour to make sure periods of change are carefully managed in a sensitive way to provide continuity of high-quality provision and reassurance to pupils and families. Our processes for transition will be adapted to suit the child's best interests and transition needs. This may include transition from pre-school to school or Year 6 to Year 7 or a move to a different school, including specialist provision.

Adaptions to the Curriculum and Learning Environment

We make the following adaptations to ensure all pupils' needs are met:

- Adapting our curriculum to ensure all pupils are able to access it, for example, by flexible grouping, 1:1 work, use of visuals, content of the lesson, etc. We use Devon's OAIP resources to ensure all schools provide high-quality inclusive support for all children and young people at universal, targeted and specialist levels.
- Ensuring classroom environments are accessible, inclusive and create a sense of belonging and safety.
- Adapting our resources and staffing, within the available Trust resources and those provided by the LA.
- Following advice shared by professionals
- Using recommended aids, such as laptops, coloured overlays, visual timetables, larger font.
- Adapting our teaching, for example, giving longer processing times, pre-teaching of key vocabulary, reading instructions aloud.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Special Educational Needs

- The Link Academy Trust Inclusion team, SENDCo, SBSL, and other SLT members provide regular CPD to other staff in school in specific aspects of meeting the needs of pupils with SEND
- All staff have regular CPD to support them to meet the needs of all children. The progress of all pupils, including those with SEND is a core aspect of the appraisal process and appraisal targets will look at how to develop staff skills in meeting individual pupil needs as necessary.
- Teaching assistants are engaged in ongoing training whereby the role of the teaching assistant is developed.
- External agencies are brought in periodically to address more specialist training needs such as dealing with specific medical conditions (e.g. epilepsy) or to train staff in the use of specific interventions (e.g. teacher of the deaf).
- Peer support and guidance is available daily for all staff in school and some of the best training development occurs through professional dialogue with colleagues looking at meeting the specific needs of a pupil.

Roles and Responsibilities

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is everyone's responsibility. All members of staff have important responsibilities.

Board of Trustees:

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility to ensure the SEND Code of Practice is adhered to and to:

- Ensure that there is a qualified teacher designated as SENDCo for the academy who meets the mandatory SENDCo training requirements

Local Board:

The Local Board endeavours to follow the guidelines as laid down in the SEND Code of Practice (2015) to:

- Help to raise awareness of SEND issues at local board meetings
- Monitor the quality and effectiveness of SEND and disability provision within the academy and update the local board on this
- Work with the Academy Head and SENDCO to determine the strategic development of the SEN policy and provision in the academy

In addition, the Local Board and Trustees will monitor exclusions and convene an exclusions committee when required. They also monitor data and outcomes and question the work of the inclusion leads in supporting high quality outcomes for all.

Role of the Trust Inclusion Partner

The Executive/Academy Heads have responsibility for the day-to-day management of all aspects of the academy's work, including provision for children with special educational needs. The Trust Inclusion Partner supports the consistent implementation of this policy across all academies, working with Academy Heads and SENDCos to improve provision and outcomes for pupils with SEND. The Trust Inclusion Partner is responsible for quality assurance, reporting risks and monitoring improvement actions.

Academy Head / SENDCo:

All Academy Heads have an accountability/duty towards SEND within the Headteacher standards with the ultimate aim of raising the achievement of pupils with SEND and ensuring our schools deliver best practice.

The principal responsibilities for the SENDCo include:

- Overseeing the day-to-day operation of the SEND policy
- Co-ordinating provision for SEND pupils and reporting on progress

- Advising on the graduated approach to providing SEND support – Assess, Plan, Do, Review
- Advising on the deployment of the school's delegated budget and other resources to meet pupils' needs effectively
- Monitoring relevant SEN CPD for all staff
- Overseeing the records of all children with special educational needs and ensuring they are up to date and comply with Data Protection requirements.
- Liaising with parents/carers of children with special educational needs
- Contributing to the in-service training of staff
- Being a point of contact with external agencies, especially the local authority and its support services
- Liaising with early years providers, other schools, educational psychologists, health and social care professionals and independent or voluntary bodies
- Liaising with potential next providers of education to ensure a pupil and their parents/carers are informed about options and a smooth transition is planned
- Monitoring the impact of interventions provided for pupils with SEND
- To lead on the development of high quality SEND provision as an integral part of the school improvement plan
- Working with the inclusion team, Executive/Academy Head and the Local Board to ensure that the academy meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) with regard to reasonable adjustments and access arrangements

All Teaching Staff:

Each teacher is responsible for:

- Delivering high quality, adaptive teaching and Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision that benefits all children
- The progress and development of every pupil in their class
- Working closely with any teaching assistants or specialist staff to plan and assess the impact of support and interventions and how they can be linked to classroom teaching
- Working with the SENDCO and Academy Head to review each pupil's progress and outcomes and decide on any changes to provision
- Ensuring they follow this SEND policy
- All teachers have an accountability/duty towards SEND within the Teacher Standards.

Pupils with medical needs:

● Pupils with medical needs will usually be provided with an Individual Health Care Plan, compiled in partnership with parents/carers and, if appropriate, the pupil themselves. See separate policy.

● Staff who administer medicine complete training where required. All medicine administration procedures adhere to the Trust's Policy Supporting Pupils Medical Conditions in School & Administration of Medicines (2026) and DfE guidelines included within Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (DfE) 2014.

SEN Information Report

The academy will ensure that SEND information is accessible on the individual academy's websites. Academies have a legal duty to publish information on their websites about the implementation of the policy for pupils with SEND. The information published will be updated annually and any changes to the information occurring during the year will be updated as soon as possible. For SEND reports please visit the individual schools' websites and search SEND report or email the academy to request a copy.

Monitoring and Accountability

Accessibility

The Trust is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and Accessibility legislation. All academies work hard to develop their accessibility and the schools' accessibility plan detailing how this is being developed can be accessed from the individual websites.

Reasonable adjustments will be made on individual needs and circumstances to prevent substantial disadvantage.

Storing and Managing Information

Pupils' SEND records will be kept in accordance to the DfE guidance contained in "Statutory Policies for Schools" outlined in the trust's Storing and Managing Information policy, available on the trust website. Once a child leaves our school, records are passed on but we have a duty to retain a chronology so we have a record of support. We are also increasingly aware of the use of AI in our schools and more information can be found in our safeguarding policy (p.37).

Responding to Complaints

In the first instance, parent/carer complaints about the provision or organisation of SEND are dealt with through the procedures outlined in the Trust's Complaints Policy. Parents are advised they may receive support from Devon Inclusion and Advice Service (DIAS). If there continues to be disagreement regarding SEND provision, the Local Authority should make arrangements that include the appointment of independent persons with a view to avoiding or resolving disagreements between the parents/carers and the school. This includes access to mediation before tribunal. Parents/carers have a right to appeal specified LA decisions to a SEND tribunal.

This Policy will be reviewed by the Standards & Curriculum Committee on an annual cycle and must be approved by the Board of Trustees.

Reviewed and approved by Standards & Curriculum Committee: 10th October 2023
Reviewed and approved by Standards & Curriculum Committee: 15th October 2024
Reviewed and approved by Standards & Curriculum Committee: 14th October 2025
Reviewed and approved by Standards & Curriculum Committee: 13th October 2026
Next Review: Autumn 2027