



Girls' Learning Trust

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) POLICY

Approved By: Trust Board
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CONTENTS

1.	Purpose	3
2.	Scope	3
3.	Definitions and Identification.....	3
4.	Legislation and Guidance	4
5.	Roles and Responsibilities	4
6.	Underpinning Principles	6
7.	School Requirements	7

1. PURPOSE

The Girls' Learning Trust ("the Trust") is committed to providing an inclusive and ambitious education for every student. This policy sets out how we identify, support, and monitor students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in line with our mission to transform lives through girls' education.

The policy is designed to:

- Ensure consistent implementation of statutory responsibilities across all Trust schools in line with the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice (2015), and the Equality Act 2010.
- Align with the Trust's Education Mission and Public Sector Equality Statement to embed inclusive practice in every aspect of school life.
- Guide schools in their development, review, and publication of key SEND-related documents, including SEND Information Reports, Accessibility Plans, and Equality Objectives.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of leaders, staff, students, and families in supporting inclusive, high-quality provision.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all schools within the Girls' Learning Trust and covers the education and support of students aged 11 to 19 who have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

3. DEFINITIONS AND IDENTIFICATION

Definition of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

In line with the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice (2015), a child or young person is identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A learning difficulty or disability is defined as:

- Having a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
- Having a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or post-16 settings.

Special educational provision means provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for others of the same age.

The term SEND is used throughout this policy to refer to both SEN and disabilities, recognising that not all children and young people with disabilities have SEN, but there is often overlap.

Disabilities

Under the Equality Act 2010, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This includes (but is not limited to) sensory impairments, long-term medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and cancer, and mental health conditions.

Where a disabled child or young person also requires special educational provision, they are also covered under the SEND framework.

The Trust is committed to meeting its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments, avoid discrimination, and promote equality of opportunity.

Broad Areas of Need

The SEND Code of Practice identifies four broad areas of need, which help schools to plan and deliver appropriate support. These areas are not intended as diagnostic labels but provide a helpful structure for understanding and responding to individual needs:

- Communication and Interaction – including speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), and conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
- Cognition and Learning – including specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia), moderate learning difficulties, and more severe or complex learning needs.
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) – including anxiety, depression, self-harming behaviours, eating disorders, or other mental health difficulties, as well as conditions like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Sensory and/or Physical Needs – including hearing or vision impairments, multi-sensory impairments, or physical disabilities which may require specialist equipment or support.

Many students have needs that span more than one category or change over time. The Trust supports a holistic, non-categorical approach focused on each child's individual profile of strengths and barriers to learning.

4. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy is informed by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 years (2015)
- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 1996
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Local Authority Local Offer for SEND provision
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF)

This policy should be read alongside other relevant school and Trust policies, including:

- Trust Education Development and Assurance Framework
- Trust Public Sector Equality Duty Statement
- School Development Plan
- School Accessibility Plan
- School Behaviour Policy

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Trust Board

The Trust Board holds overall accountability for SEND provision across the Trust. It ensures that each school meets its statutory responsibilities and that SEND provision aligns with the Trust's inclusive mission. The Board receives termly reports from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that include analysis of SEND outcomes, progress, and safeguarding. The Board also approves the SEND Policy and monitors its implementation across all schools.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The CEO is responsible for the strategic leadership and oversight of SEND across the Trust. This includes ensuring that schools are well-supported and held to account for the quality and inclusivity of their provision. The CEO leads on cross-Trust priorities, commissions external reviews where needed, and ensures SEND is embedded within wider educational strategy.

Local Governing Bodies (LGBs)

Each school's Local Governing Body plays a critical role in holding leaders to account for the effectiveness of SEND provision. Governors receive regular reports from the Headteacher on progress, outcomes, and inclusion for students with SEND. Each LGB must appoint a Link Governor for SEND who meets regularly with the school's SENCO, engages in monitoring activities, and ensures that SEND remains a focus for school improvement.

Headteachers

Headteachers are responsible for the overall leadership and delivery of SEND provision within their school. They ensure that SEND is prioritised in school development planning, that resources are appropriately deployed, and that the school meets all statutory duties under the SEND Code of Practice. Headteachers are also responsible for creating a culture of inclusion and ensuring that all staff understand their responsibilities for supporting students with SEND.

Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs)

Each school in the Trust must designate a qualified SENCO with the time, capacity, and authority to lead the day-to-day coordination of SEND provision. SENCOs play a pivotal role in identifying student needs, planning and implementing appropriate support, monitoring impact, and working collaboratively with staff, families, and external professionals. They are responsible for ensuring that all students on the SEND register have clear, regularly reviewed support plans, developed with input from the student and their family. SENCOs also ensure that students with SEND have equitable access to the full curriculum and wider school life. In addition, they lead staff training and support ongoing professional development in inclusive teaching practice.

Classroom Teachers

All teachers are teachers of SEND. They are responsible for delivering Quality First teaching that meets the needs of every learner in their classroom. This includes adapting lessons, using graduated approaches to support, and implementing any additional strategies set out in students' SEND Support Plans. Teachers are expected to engage in professional development and to work closely with the SENCO and support staff to evaluate and refine provision.

Support Staff

Teaching assistants and other support staff play a vital role in enabling students with SEND to access learning, develop independence, and build confidence. Under the guidance of the SENCO and class teachers, support staff help deliver tailored interventions, support small-group or individual work, and contribute to the review and evaluation of student progress. They are expected to take part in relevant training and to work collaboratively as part of the wider team around the student.

Students

Wherever appropriate, students are actively involved in decisions about their learning and support. They are encouraged to reflect on their strengths, challenges, and aspirations, and to contribute to the development of their individual support plans. Building student voice, agency, and self-advocacy is a key part of the Trust's inclusive approach.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are valued as expert partners in the SEND process. They are involved from the earliest stage of identification and throughout all planning, review, and decision-making processes.

Schools will ensure that communication with families is regular and responsive, and that support plans are co-produced wherever possible.

6. UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

Our approach to SEND is grounded in a shared set of principles that underpin inclusive, high-quality education for all students. These principles guide the strategic intent and day-to-day practice across our schools.

- **School-Led, Trust-Aligned:** each school has the flexibility to design SEND provision that reflects its student needs, while being supported and held to account within a clear Trust-wide framework. This enables innovation and responsiveness, underpinned by shared commitments and high expectations.
- **Inclusion at the Heart:** we are committed to transforming lives through girls' education, and inclusion is central to that mission. Every student, including those with SEND, is valued and supported to succeed. We believe that inclusive practice benefits all learners and strengthens our school communities.
- **Quality First Teaching:** we prioritise an inclusive, whole-class approach that delivers high-quality, responsive teaching for all students. It ensures that every learner, including those with SEND, has access to a stimulating, challenging, and supportive curriculum. Teachers adapt instruction and classroom environments to meet a broad range of needs from the outset.
- **Needs Before Labels:** our approach is person-centred and responsive to the individual. Support is based on a student's unique profile of strengths and needs—not on a diagnostic label or category. We work flexibly to adapt provision and remove barriers, regardless of whether a formal diagnosis is in place.
- **Working in Partnership with Families:** we view parents and carers as vital partners in the SEND journey. From identification and planning to review and evaluation, families are actively involved in shaping the support their child receives. We listen carefully, communicate openly, and respect the lived experience of every family.
- **Full Participation in School Life:** students with SEND are supported to take part fully in the academic and wider life of the school, including clubs, trips, leadership roles, and enrichment opportunities. Our goal is for all students to be seen, heard, and included—socially, emotionally, and intellectually.
- **Everyone's Responsibility:** SEND is a whole-school responsibility. Every teacher is a teacher of SEND, and every leader is a leader of inclusion. Our staff are supported to develop the knowledge, confidence, and mindset needed to meet the needs of all students in every classroom, every day.

Identification of Need

The identification of SEND is not a one-off event, nor should it be based on assumptions or labels. The Trust promotes early identification and response through a graduated approach. This includes:

- **Inclusive classroom practice:** Quality First Teaching is the first step in identifying potential SEND. Teachers adapt their teaching and environment to meet diverse needs, and concerns about progress are addressed through classroom-based strategies.
- **Monitoring and assessment:** student progress is tracked through data analysis, work reviews, and

observations. Where expected progress is not being made, this prompts further investigation.

- Collaboration and communication: teachers, pastoral and safeguarding teams, and SENCOs work together to identify needs, particularly where emotional, social, or behavioural factors are present.
- Student and family voice: families and students are central to the identification process, and their insights inform decisions from the earliest stages.
- Support at transition points: liaison with feeder schools ensures that information about SEND is shared promptly and accurately during key transitions.
- External professional advice: the school works with external specialists such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists to support assessment and intervention planning.
- SEND should never be assumed on the basis of factors such as slower academic progress, attendance or behaviour issues, or lack of English as an additional language. Any such concerns must trigger an investigation into the underlying causes and lead to appropriate support strategies.

Dynamic and Person-Centred Approach

The Trust does not view students with SEND as a static group. Individual needs may emerge, evolve or lessen over time. Identification is therefore an ongoing process that must be regularly reviewed and informed by a wide range of information.

Each school within the Trust is responsible for ensuring that systems are in place to monitor student progress, intervene early, and review provision regularly. Students who no longer require special educational provision will be removed from the SEND register but remain monitored to ensure continued success.

7. SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Each school within the Trust must meet the statutory duties set out in the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice (2015), and the Equality Act 2010. In addition to implementing the principles and responsibilities described in this policy, schools are required to ensure the following documentation, procedures, and practices are in place and regularly reviewed:

Statutory Documents

Schools within the Trust must ensure that they:

- Maintain and publish a **SEND Information Report** on its website, updated annually, that explains how the school identifies, assesses, and supports students with SEND, and how it works with families and other agencies.
- Develop and publish an **Accessibility Plan**, reviewed at least every three years, outlining how the school will increase access to the curriculum, physical environment, and information for students with disabilities. This must align with the Trust's Public Sector Equality Statement, which provides the overarching principles and expectations for advancing equality and fostering inclusion across all schools. Each school's documentation must reflect and operationalise this shared commitment.
- Ensure an up-to-date **SEND Register** is maintained, capturing students receiving SEND support and those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- Include a **link to the SEND Local Offer** on their website that is easily accessible to students and parents.

Appointments and Capacity

Schools within the Trust must ensure that they:

- Appoint a designated Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who is a qualified teacher and has completed the relevant professional national qualification for SEN (currently the NPQ) within three years of taking up the role (if not already qualified).
- Ensure the SENCO has sufficient time, administrative support, and strategic status to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
- Appoint a Link Governor for SEND who meets regularly with the SENCO and reports to the Local Governing Body.

Provision and Practice

Schools within the Trust must ensure that they:

- Adopt a graduated approach (assess–plan–do–review) to meeting SEND needs, with timely identification and evidence-based interventions.
- Ensure all teaching staff adapt their teaching to meet diverse needs.
- Ensure that exam procedures are secure, and systems are in place to meet all student's exam access needs (within JCQ regulations).
- Ensure students with SEND are provided with the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of school life, including leadership roles, trips, extracurricular activities, and enrichment.
- Work in close partnership with families, involving them meaningfully at every stage of the SEND process.
- Engage appropriately with external agencies, including educational psychologists, therapists, and advisory services, to support the needs of individual students.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Schools within the Trust must ensure that they:

- Monitor the progress and wellbeing of students with SEND and evaluate the impact of support using a combination of quantitative data and qualitative feedback.
- Ensure that support plans and EHCPs are regularly reviewed, at least termly, and reflect student voice and family input.
- Contribute to Trust-wide quality assurance processes, including SEND reviews, professional development, and peer moderation.