



Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy

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1. Introduction

Our schools are specialist education provision for pupils who cannot access mainstream education due to difficulties associated with their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), often alongside trauma or social, emotional, or mental health needs which can result in behaviour that challenges.

Pupils joining us may have had a turbulent educational history, and may have a wide range of diagnoses, including (but not limited to) autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), pathological demand avoidance (PDA), foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, other neurodivergent profiles, learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties, and the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma.

Every member of our staff team is committed to providing a welcoming, attractive, and stimulating environment that supports the needs and development of pupils, families, and care teams. Every pupil and family in our school community is valued, and diversity is celebrated. Our schools are staffed by qualified teachers and teaching assistants, providing a broad and balanced curriculum in a safe, stimulating, and caring environment in which everyone can achieve, develop, learn, and grow. Teaching is tailored to individual need, providing challenge and support and encouraging every pupil to reach their full potential. Staff foster a positive ethos that builds 'life skills' and instils lifelong learning aspirations through activities that are engaging and enjoyable.

2. Legal framework and status of this policy

This policy has been written with regard to the legislation and statutory guidance set out below, and should be read alongside the Independent School Standards, which set the regulatory framework within which all Polaris Education schools operate.

Source	What it requires
Children and Families Act 2014, Part 3	The primary legislation underpinning Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, EHC needs assessments, and the duty on schools to use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision a pupil needs.
SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)	Statutory guidance on identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, including the graduated approach (Assess, Plan, Do, Review), SEN Support, and the EHC needs assessment and planning process. The school has regard to this Code.
Equality Act 2010	Prohibits discrimination against disabled pupils and requires the school to make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services, so disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage.
Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule, Part 1, paragraph 2(1)(b)(i)	Requires the school's curriculum policy, plans and schemes of work to consider the ages, aptitudes, and needs of all pupils, including those with an EHC plan.
Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule, Part 6, paragraph 32(3)(b)	Requires the school to make available to parents particulars of its educational and welfare provision for pupils with EHC plans.
Independent School Standards Guidance for Independent Schools (revised April 2026)	Departmental guidance confirming how proprietors meet the standards above, including that teaching should show a good understanding of pupils' aptitudes, needs, and prior attainment (paragraph 3(d) of the ISS).
Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)	Statutory safeguarding guidance, in force from 1 September 2026, which recognises that pupils with SEND can face increased safeguarding risks and additional barriers to disclosing abuse and requires staff to be alert to this.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)	Statutory multi-agency guidance, in force from March 2026, setting out how agencies including schools, health and social care work together to support children, including those with SEND and disabilities.
SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (DfE, 2023)	Sets out national standards for SEND provision and reforms to the EHC plan process; current operational practice, including this policy, continues to reflect it pending any future legislative change (see Section 23).

3. Inclusion statement

We make every effort to achieve maximum inclusion of all pupils while meeting their individual needs. This policy builds on the school's wider inclusion policy, which recognises the entitlement of every pupil to a broad and balanced curriculum. This SEND policy reinforces the need for quality-first teaching that is fully inclusive. The proprietor will ensure that appropriate provision is made for all pupils with SEND.

4. Aims and objectives

- To enable the highest possible levels of achievement for all pupils.
- To be a genuinely inclusive school.
- To identify all pupils requiring SEND provision as early as possible.
- To meet individual needs through a wide range of provision.
- To achieve high levels of satisfaction and participation from pupils, parents, and carers.
- To share a common vision and understanding with all stakeholders.
- To give transparent resourcing to SEND.
- To provide curriculum access for all.
- To work in partnership with other agencies and schools to promote inclusion.
- To develop the level of staff expertise needed to meet pupils' needs.

We recognise that every pupil in our schools has SEND. Pupils' needs may change over the course of their school life, and in implementing this policy we aim to help pupils overcome the difficulties they face.

5. Admission arrangements

Admission arrangements are set out in full in the school's Admissions Policy. In line with the Equality Act 2010, the school will not discriminate against disabled children and will take all reasonable steps, including reasonable adjustments, to provide effective educational provision for every pupil admitted.

5.1 Assessment and consultation before a placement is agreed

As a specialist provision, the school carries out a thorough assessment and consultation process before any placement is agreed, usually the referral comes from a Local Authority. The school will work with a parent/carers/key adult, or another school or setting as part of the process. This process typically includes:

- Reviewing the pupil's current EHC plan (or, where one is not yet in place, the evidence supporting the referral) and all recent professional reports, including educational, health, therapeutic and social care advice.
- Reviewing relevant risk assessments and behaviour support information from the pupil's current or previous setting(s), including any history of incidents, use of restrictive practice, or safeguarding concerns.

- Visits – to see the pupil in their current setting and, where appropriate, for the pupil and family to visit the school – and discussions with the pupil's current school, Local Authority and, where involved, health and social care professionals.
- Discussion with the pupil and their parents/carers about their needs, views, and aspirations for the placement.

This process is used to consider, in the round:

- Whether the school can meet the pupil's needs.
- Whether the provision on offer is appropriate to the pupil's age, ability, aptitude and SEND.
- Whether there is a suitable peer group and cohort match, so the pupil can be safely and effectively integrated into the school community.
- Whether the placement is right both for the individual pupil and for the existing school community, including the pupils already on roll.

5.2 Where the school advises it cannot meet need

Following this assessment and consultation process, there may be occasions where the school advises the Local Authority and/or parents/carers that it is unable to offer a placement, or that a proposed placement is not appropriate. This may be, for example, where:

- The provision on offer is not suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude or SEND.
- There is not an appropriate peer group or learning environment within which the pupil's needs could be met safely and effectively.
- Admission would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for other pupils already at the school.
- The provision the pupil requires would be incompatible with the efficient use of the school's resources.
- Identified risks (for example, relating to behaviour, safeguarding or clinical need) could not be safely managed within the school's available staffing, physical resources, and therapeutic provision.

Where the school reaches this view, it will explain its reasoning to the Local Authority and parents/carers in writing, to support them in identifying a more appropriate placement.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for this policy and for SEND provision across the school. The Head Teacher delegates day-to-day co-ordination of SEND provision to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCo), supported by the Pastoral Lead and administration staff, but retains ultimate accountability for ensuring the school meets its duties to pupils with SEND.

6.2 The SENDCo

The SENDCo is responsible for:

- Co-ordinating provision for pupils with SEND.
- Liaising with and advising teachers.
- Managing Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and, in conjunction with the Pastoral Lead, managing pastoral support.
- Overseeing records for all pupils with SEND.

- Liaising with parents/carers of pupils with SEND, in conjunction with the Pastoral Lead.
- Contributing to the in-service training of staff.
- Liaising with external agencies, including the Local Authority's support and educational psychology services, health and social services, and voluntary bodies.

6.3 All staff

All school staff have a responsibility for pupils with SEND in their classes, to ensure quality-first teaching with adaptation, differentiation, and personalisation to meet need. Staff are aware of their responsibilities towards pupils with SEND, whether or not a pupil has an EHC plan, and show a positive and sensitive attitude towards every pupil. Staff responsibilities are also set out in individual job descriptions.

Teaching Assistants play a major role in supporting pupils with SEND. The deployment of TAs is pupil-centred, based on assessed need rather than a blanket approach.

7. Identification and assessment

We accept the principle that pupils' needs should be identified and met as early as possible. The SEND Code of Practice sets out four broad areas of need:

- Communication and Interaction (C&I).
- Cognition and Learning (C&L).
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties (SEMH).
- Sensory and/or Physical needs (S/P).

While these four areas broadly identify a pupil's primary need, we also consider the needs of the whole child, recognising that the following factors (and others) may also affect progress, though they are not SEND in themselves:

- Disability.
- Disadvantage.
- Attendance and punctuality.
- Health and welfare.
- English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- Being in receipt of Pupil Premium.
- Being a Looked After Child (LAC) or previously looked after.
- Being a child of a serving member of the armed forces.

Whole-school tracking data is shared termly as an early indicator of possible need. We also draw on: analysis of assessment data (including reading ages and termly/annual assessments); teacher concerns; parental concerns; tracking of individual pupil progress over time; information from previous schools on transfer; and information from other services.

8. Curriculum access and provision

Classes are small (no more than 8 pupils) and organised by key stage and general learning profile. Teachers adapt and differentiate the curriculum to meet individual learning needs, and to plan, teach and assess accordingly. As every pupil in our schools is identified as having SEND, provision for additional needs is built into everyday practice and specifically matched to each pupil. Provision may include:

- In-class support for small groups with an additional teacher or Teaching Assistant.
- Small-group withdrawal with a TA or Learning Mentor.
- Individual class support or individual withdrawal.
- Further differentiation of resources.
- Study buddies or cross-age tutoring.
- Homework/learning support club.
- 1:1 Social, Emotional and Mental Health programmes built into the timetable, designed around the individual pupil.
- Structured interventions.
- Alternative learning materials or specialist equipment.
- Group support.
- Additional adult time devising interventions and monitoring their effectiveness.
- Staff development and training in more effective strategies.
- Access to specialist teaching and the Educational Psychology Service.

9. Monitoring pupil progress

Progress is the crucial factor in determining the need for additional support. Adequate progress:

- Narrows the attainment gap between the pupil and their peers.
- Prevents the attainment gap widening.
- Helps the pupil catch up with peers of a similar age.
- Is equivalent to that of peers starting from the same baseline, even if below that of the majority of peers.
- Equals or improves on the pupil's own previous rate of progress.
- Ensures full curricular access.
- Shows improvement in self-help, social, or personal skills.
- Shows improvement in the pupil's behaviour.

10. Record keeping

The school records the steps taken to meet pupils' individual needs. The SENDCo maintains these records and ensures appropriate access to them. In addition to usual school records, each pupil's profile includes:

- The pupil's own perceptions of their difficulties.
- Information from parents/carers.
- Information on progress and behaviour.
- Information from health and social care services.
- Information from other agencies involved with the pupil.

11. SEN Support: targets and Support Plans

Every pupil has an individual Support Plan, setting out targets and any provision that is additional to and different from usual classroom provision. For pupils with an EHC plan, provision meets the outcomes and provision

specified in the plan. Where all pupils have curriculum targets, these inform the Support Plan; curriculum targets are recorded in teachers' planning.

Strategies for a pupil's progress are recorded in an individual Action Plan, developed through discussion with the pupil and their parent/carer, containing:

- Short-term and long-term targets, reflecting the pupil's own ambitions where possible.
- Teaching strategies to be used.
- Provision made.
- Outside agency support involved.
- The date for review.
- Success and/or exit criteria.
- The outcomes recorded at review.

The Action Plan records only what is different from or additional to the normal differentiated curriculum and focuses on three or four individual targets that closely match the pupil's needs.

12. Reviewing a Support Plan

Support Plans are reviewed at least three times a year by teachers with tutor responsibilities. Reviews are shared with pupils in a way that is accessible to them.

13. The graduated approach

Almost all pupils joining us already have an EHC plan and correspondingly high levels of need. The school nonetheless applies the graduated approach set out in the SEND Code of Practice – Assess, Plan, Do, Review – to every pupil, ensuring provision continues to evolve in response to changing needs. Where, after consultation with parents/carers, the school decides a pupil requires additional assessment to secure appropriate progress, the school will support that assessment. The class teacher remains responsible for planning and delivering individualised programmes, and parents/carers are kept closely informed of actions taken and their outcomes.

External support services may advise on targets for a new Support Plan and provide specialist input. Support Plan intervention is usually triggered when, despite differentiated teaching and a sustained level of support, a pupil:

- Continues to make little or no progress in specific areas over a sustained period.
- Continues to work at a level considerably below (broadly, a year or more behind) what would be expected for a pupil of a similar age.
- Continues to experience difficulty developing literacy or numeracy skills.
- Has emotional or social difficulties that substantially impede learning.
- Has sensory or physical needs requiring additional specialist equipment, or visits from or advice from specialists.
- Has communication or interaction difficulties that impede the development of social relationships and present barriers to learning.

Parental consent is sought before any external agency becomes involved. The resulting Support Plan may incorporate specialist strategies, which may be implemented by the class teacher, working with other adults as needed.

14. Requesting an EHC needs assessment

The great majority of our pupils arrive with an EHC plan already in place. Where a pupil does not, the school will request an EHC needs assessment from the Local Authority when, despite an individualised, sustained programme of SEN Support, the pupil remains a significant cause for concern. A request for an EHC needs assessment may also be made by a parent/carer or an outside agency. In support of a request, the school will provide:

- Records from past interventions.
- Current and past SEN Support Plans.
- Records and outcomes of regular reviews undertaken.
- Information on the pupil's health and relevant medical history.
- Curriculum attainment information.
- Relevant assessments from specialists, such as specialist teachers and educational psychologists.
- The views of parents/carers and, where possible, the pupil.
- Social Care/Educational Welfare Service reports, where relevant.
- Details of any other professional involvement.

15. Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs)

An EHC plan will normally be issued where, following an EHC needs assessment, the Local Authority considers the pupil requires provision beyond what the school can offer through SEN Support alone. The school recognises that a request for an EHC needs assessment does not automatically lead to an EHC plan.

An EHC plan sets out learning objectives for the pupil. These inform targets that are: matched to the plan's longer-term outcomes; shorter-term; established through consultation with the pupil and parents/carers; set out in a Support Plan; implemented in the classroom; and delivered by the class teacher, with appropriate additional support where specified in the plan.

15.1 Annual reviews

EHC plans must be reviewed at least annually, and before their anniversary. The Local Authority informs the Head Teacher, at the start of each academic year, which pupils require a review that year. The SENDCo organises these reviews and invites:

- The pupil's parent/carer.
- The pupil, where appropriate to their age and understanding.
- Any professional outside the school who has had input during the review year.
- Any other person the Head Teacher or parent/carer considers appropriate.

The aim of the review is to: assess the pupil's progress against the outcomes in the EHC plan; review the provision made to meet the pupil's needs as identified in the plan; and consider whether the plan remains appropriate given the pupil's performance during the year, including whether it should be maintained, amended or ceased, and whether new outcomes should be set for the coming year.

At key stage/phase transition reviews, receiving schools or colleges are invited to attend, to support planning for the new phase and to give parents/carers the opportunity to liaise with the receiving setting. Within the time limits set out in the Code of Practice, the SENDCo completes the annual review paperwork and sends it, with supporting documentation, to the Local Authority. The school recognises that the decision to maintain, amend or cease an EHC plan rest with the Local Authority.

Many pupils join us shortly after an EHC needs assessment or review has already been carried out as part of the pre-placement consultation described in Section 5.1, specifically to confirm that this placement is appropriate. Where this is the case, the school's annual review cycle for that pupil is set from the date of that pre-placement review, rather than the original anniversary of the EHC plan, so that the review cycle reflects when the plan was last genuinely tested against the pupil's needs and placement.

15.2 Early reviews

In addition to the scheduled annual review, the school may request, or agree to, an early review of a pupil's EHC plan where this is in the pupil's best interests. Circumstances in which an early review may be appropriate include where:

- The pupil's needs have changed significantly since the plan was last reviewed.
- New professional advice (for example, from a clinician, therapist, or educational psychologist) suggests a different level or type of provision is required.
- The suitability of the current placement is in question, for any reason.
- The school forms the view that it may no longer be able to meet the pupil's needs safely and effectively within its current provision, staffing, or resources.

Where the school identifies any of these circumstances, the SENDCo will raise this with the Local Authority, parents/carers, and relevant professionals promptly, rather than waiting for the next scheduled annual review, so that any necessary change in provision can be considered without delay.

16. Co-production and partnership with parents/carers

We aim to work in genuine partnership with parents and carers, by:

- Keeping parents/carers informed and supported throughout assessment and any related decision-making about SEND provision.
- Working effectively with other agencies supporting the pupil and family.
- Giving parents/carers opportunities to play an active and valued role in their child's education and ensuring they feel welcome.
- Ensuring parents/carers have access to appropriate communication aids and providing information in an accessible way.
- Encouraging parents/carers to share any difficulties or needs they perceive and building confidence that the school will listen and act.
- Focusing on the pupil's strengths as well as their areas of additional need.

17. Involvement of pupils

We recognise that every pupil has the right to be involved in decisions and to exercise choice, in line with the SEND Code of Practice. Pupils are involved, in an age- and stage-appropriate way, in monitoring and reviewing their own progress. We encourage pupils to:

- State their views about their education and learning.
- Identify their own needs, through accessible self-assessment and self-evaluation.
- Share in setting individual targets across the curriculum.
- Review their own progress.

Pupils identified as having SEND are, in addition, invited to participate in: Support Plan reviews and target setting; regular meetings with a named adult; working with a learning mentor, where appropriate; and annual reviews.

18. Special educational provision and adaptations

Schools have a range of the following adaptations in place to meet sensory and physical needs, according to the needs of their pupil population:

- Sensory rooms and resources, appropriate seating, acoustic conditioning, and lighting.
- Adaptations to the physical environment.
- Adaptations to school policies and procedures.
- Access to alternative or augmented forms of communication.
- Provision of tactile and kinaesthetic materials.
- Access to low-vision aids.
- Access to specialist aids, equipment, or furniture.
- Regular and frequent access to specialist support.

19. A trauma-informed approach to SEND

Many of our pupils have experienced trauma, loss, instability or adverse childhood experiences alongside their SEND, and the two frequently interact: a pupil's SEMH presentation may be shaped as much by their history as by a diagnosed condition, and dysregulated behaviour is often a pupil's communication of distress rather than simple non-compliance. In line with the school's Trauma-Informed Relationships and Behaviour Policy, our approach to SEND provision is relational as well as educational:

- Assessment considers the whole picture – developmental, medical, cognitive, and relational – rather than a diagnosis alone, so provision addresses the pupil's needs rather than only a label.
- Support Plans and EHC plan targets are written to reflect regulation, relational safety and attachment needs where these are relevant, not only academic or communication targets.
- Staff are trained to recognise the signs of dysregulation and trauma responses, and to respond with co-regulation and predictable routines rather than escalation.
- Transitions (between lessons, staff, key stages, or settings) are planned and supported with extra care, recognising that change, and uncertainty can be especially difficult for pupils with a trauma history.
- Provision maintains high expectations of what each pupil can achieve, while remaining flexible about the pace and method by which they get there.

20. Links with education and health support services

We maintain effective working links with services in Children and Young People's Services, including:

- Speech and Language Therapy.
- Other Children and Young People's Services.
- Community Health Services and the School Nursing Service.
- Family support and safeguarding services.
- The Child Development Centre.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Autism outreach services.
- Social care.
- Virtual School services for looked-after children.

21. Transition and links with other schools and colleges

Links with other schools, including special schools and colleges, are actively promoted. Transition phases can be particularly difficult for our pupils, and every effort is made to plan and support these well in advance, working closely with the receiving setting and the pupil's family.

22. Staff development (INSET)

To maintain and develop the quality of provision, staff undertake appropriate training and continuing professional development. Senior leaders and wider Polaris staff deliver training within school to teaching and support staff, who also benefit from training opportunities provided by external specialists.

23. Looking ahead: national SEND reform

In February 2026 the Government published its schools white paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving, which proposes significant reform to the national SEND system, including a new tiered model of support and the phased introduction of digital Individual Support Plans (ISPs), with EHC plans reserved for pupils with the most complex needs. These are proposals, not current law: the SEND Code of Practice 2015, the Children and Families Act 2014, and the existing EHC plan and SEN Support framework described in this policy remain in force in full, and any pupil with an existing EHC plan keeps that plan and its provision under the current rules.

The Head Teacher and SENDCo monitor developments in national SEND policy, including any resulting legislation, and this policy will be reviewed and updated as soon as any confirmed changes are due to take effect. Staff, parents, and carers will be kept informed of any material change well in advance.

24. Monitoring and review of this policy

The school considers this policy to be important and undertakes a thorough review of both the policy and its practice at least annually or sooner following a change in relevant legislation or statutory guidance. The outcomes of this review inform the School Improvement Plan.

Review Dates

Date	Version	Summary of Changes Made

Appendix: Glossary of common abbreviations

This glossary is provided for information; some terms (e.g. ISP) refer to proposed future changes rather than current statutory terminology (see Section 23).

ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AfL	Assessment for Learning
APD	Auditory Processing Disorder
AS	Asperger Syndrome
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
AT	Attainment Target
BDA	British Dyslexia Association
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CATs	Cognitive Ability Tests
CDC	Child Development Centre
CiC / CLA	Child(ren) in Care / Looked After
CiN	Child(ren) in Need
CoP	Code of Practice
CP	Child Protection
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CT	Class Teacher
DCD	Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia)
DfE	Department for Education
DS	Down Syndrome
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EHCP	Education, Health, and Care Plan
EP / EPS	Educational Psychologist / Educational Psychology Service
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FE	Further Education
FSM	Free School Meals
GDD	Global Developmental Delay
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
HT	Head Teacher
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

INSET	In-Service Training
ISP	Individual Support Plan – a proposed future replacement for some EHCPs under national SEND reform proposals; not yet in force (see Section 23)
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
NC	National Curriculum
NQT / ECT	Newly Qualified Teacher / Early Career Teacher
ODD	Oppositional Defiance Disorder
OT	Occupational Therapy
PD	Physical Difficulty
PDA	Pathological Demand Avoidance
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
PSHE	Personal, Social, Health, and Economic Education
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
S&L / SALT	Speech and Language / Speech and Language Therapist
SATs	Standard Assessment Tasks
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENDCo	Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
SoW	Scheme of Work
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
TA	Teaching Assistant
VI	Visual Impairment