The Abbey

# Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy

## The Abbey School, Reading

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| Reviewed by: | Whole School SENDCo | September 2025 |
| Ratified by: | Whole School Leadership Committee and Governor Audit | September 2025 |
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## Aims

The aims of this policy are to promote good practice in our identification and management of special educational needs and to explain the support we can provide for students and the co-operation we require from families.

This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible formats, if required.

## Legal Framework

This SEND Policy is written to **ensure compliance with** our legal obligations under the **Children and Families Act 2014**. It is also **guided by** other relevant legislation and regulations that relate to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities (D).
These include:

- SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (January 2015)
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- The Children Act 1989
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Special Needs and Disability Act 2001
- The Education Act 1996
- School policies, including the Child Protection Safeguarding Policy

## SEND

A student has a special educational need and/or disability if they have an additional need which means that they need special educational provision to be made for them, for example:

- the student has a significantly greater difficulty in accessing learning than the majority of others of the same age, nationally; or
- has a disability which means that the student would have difficulty accessing educational facilities provided for children of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post 16 institutions;
- is under five and falls within the definitions above or is likely to do so when of compulsory school age if special educational provision was not made for the child.

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) outlines four broad areas of special educational need:

- Communication and Interaction: including needs related to speech, language, and communication, such as Autism Spectrum Condition (ASD);
- Cognition and Learning: encompassing specific learning difficulties like dyslexia and dyscalculia, as well as moderate or severe learning difficulties;
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties: covering a range of needs from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to attachment and mental health difficulties;
- Sensory and/or Physical Needs: which includes visual and hearing impairments and physical disabilities.

Some students may have difficulties in more than one of these four categories. The school aims to:

- Work closely with families and students to take into account their views and aspirations and the families' experience of and hopes for their child.

- Invite families to be involved at every stage of planning and reviewing the SEND provision for their child.
- Ensure that students benefit from ‘Quality First Teaching’: teachers assess, plan and teach all students to allow them to progress their learning. The school implements focused interventions to target particular skills.
- Have high expectations for all students.

A student must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language in which they are or will be taught is different from a language which they speak or is spoken at home. However, students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) will be provided with appropriate support where we observe that their learning is being impacted, provided that they meet the School's academic criteria. Please refer to the School's policy for students with English as an additional language.

A student who finds a particular subject difficult does not necessarily have an "additional need " in the legal sense of that expression; there will often be disparities in the speed with which children learn, in their skill at solving problems and in their general acumen.

The expression "additional need" covers a wide variety of conditions and may include those known as: dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, autistic spectrum condition and learning needs which result from social, emotional or mental health difficulties.

In accordance with the 2010 Disability Act, a “disability” is a physical, sensory, medical or mental impairment which has a “substantial” and “long-term” negative effect on the ability to perform normal activities.

Students with additional needs may be of a high or low academic ability. Sometimes an additional need becomes apparent for the first time at the age of 11 or older, when educational pressures tend to increase.

## Admissions for Students with SEND

We aim to deliver an excellent academic curriculum for every student and we accept students with SEND as long as we have the necessary resources and facilities to support them.
During the admissions process:

- Parents must inform the school of any known or suspected health conditions, disabilities or learning difficulties. We may have to withdraw an offer of a place if this information is not fully disclosed.
- We assess a pupil's suitability based on their performance on taster days, an academic potential screening, and a review of their academic and social needs documentation.
- We provide reasonable adjustments for students with SEND throughout this process, following the guidelines set by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

## Policy Statement

**The School**: The Abbey is a mainstream independent school with high academic standards which accepts girls from the age of three years. We use a range of appropriate tools in order to identify need. These include:

Evidence obtained by teacher observation/formative assessment;

- Summative assessment data (to include Entrance Examination results in our Senior School, internal and external exam results);
- Information from families, including external professional reports;
- Records from feeder schools;
- Screening tests;

We believe support of learning should be fluid, timely and open to all, to maximise progression for our students. We aspire to enable this through regular, open communication between classroom teachers and the SENDCo, together with feedback from families and students. We aim for the support of students' learning to occur, as much as possible, within the classroom.

We aim to implement a 'graduated approach' for the students identified as having additional needs, as set out in the Code of Practice 2021.

In identifying a student as needing SEND support the teacher/teachers working with the SENDCo, will carry out a clear analysis of the student's needs. This should draw on teacher assessment and experience of the student, their previous progress and attainment. This assessment will be reviewed regularly. Where necessary the School may support parents in contacting outside agencies for further assessment.

**Provision:** All teachers and teaching assistants who work with the student will be made aware of their needs through the Whole School Provision Maps, and any teaching strategies or approaches that are required from a Pupil Passport. We aim for support of students' learning to occur, as much as possible, within the classroom. The impact and quality of the support will be evaluated regularly, through meetings with teachers and termly assessments.

Following the graduated approach process, if the team supporting the child and the SENCo identify a potential need for an external agency or an Access Arrangements assessor, a referral will be made by the SENCo in consultation with the family. While the school is equipped to identify special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and provide tailored learning support, we do not have the authority to provide a medical or formal diagnosis unless we have specialist staff employed for that purpose. We advise families to contact their GP if they believe their child may have an underlying medical condition or SEND. The school will support families who choose to seek an assessment from external agencies.

**Consultation**: We will do all that is reasonable to report and consult with families about their child's additional needs and to ensure that teachers are given any necessary information about a student's learning needs and that teaching practices are appropriate via the Pupil Passports and regular team meetings.

## The SEND Register and Levels of Support

Students with identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or additional learning support are added to the school's confidential SEND Register. This register helps all staff consistently meet each pupil's needs.

The register includes the pupil's name, their level on the SEND Code of Practice (2015), the type of need, and the provision in place. This information is also noted on the iSAMS system with a coloured star, which corresponds to the four levels of support:

- Level 1: Monitoring (Grey Star): A pupil at this stage has a concern raised by their teacher. Their progress is tracked through ongoing assessments. The child will not have a pupil passport.
- Level 2: In-class support (Yellow Star): The pupil has an identified need and receives support primarily through differentiated teaching. A Pupil Passport may be used.
- Level 3: SEND Intervention (Green Star): This level is for students who require different or additional provision beyond what their peers receive. A Pupil Passport is required.
- Level 4: EHCP (Red Star): The pupil has a formal Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Need, which details their required support.

## Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are provided to ensure a student with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can be fairly assessed without their performance being unfairly impacted. They are based on a student's specific needs, not just a diagnosis. Common examples include:

- Extra Time: Additional time and/or rest breaks.
- A Reader or Scribe: A person who reads questions or writes answers for the student.
- Specialised Equipment: Use of a laptop, word processor, or assistive technology like text-to-speech.
- Adapted Papers: Documents in enlarged print or Braille.

A word processor cannot be used simply because a student prefers to type or can work faster on a keyboard. The need for this arrangement must be formally supported by evidence.

## Eligibility and Evidence

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) sets strict criteria for all access arrangements. To be eligible for extra time, a student must have at least one standardised score of 84 or less on an assessment measuring:

- Speed of reading
- Speed of reading comprehension
- Speed of writing
- Working memory or phonological processing

In rare cases, a student may be awarded up to 25% extra time if they have at least two low-average scores (85-89) in speed of processing.

A learning difficulty alone does not guarantee an access arrangement. The school must provide evidence that the difficulty would significantly and unfairly impair the student's performance in an exam. The school reserves the right not to submit a request if the evidence does not meet JCQ's criteria.

## The Application Process

The Exams and Academic Processes Manager, in close collaboration with the SENDCo, coordinates all access arrangements. The application process requires ongoing evidence from the school, which must be submitted well in advance of the final exams.

**Referrals**: Heads of Departments and Heads of Years can refer students to the SENDCo for assessment.

**Specialist Assessment**: Evidence and recommendations must be provided by qualified professionals (e.g., Educational Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, or Specialist Teachers) who are recognised by JCQ.

**Trialing Arrangements**: Students who are eligible for an access arrangement should be given the chance to trial it before the public examinations to ensure it is effective. JCQ recommends that most arrangements are in place at the start of the course.

Family and Student Involvement: Parents and students are encouraged to raise any concerns early on. Students must also sign a data protection form to allow their information to be shared for this purpose. Prior consultation with the centre cannot be used to process an application". The cost in either case must be borne by the parents.

**Learning support**: In our Junior School, a small learning support group may concentrate on developing skills such as phonics, spelling, mathematics (sets from UI and LIII) and handwriting for a short, fixed period of time, though our first intervention tends to be within the classroom.In the Senior School, mathematics classes are set from UIII and there are opportunities for English intervention in UIII and LIV. There is flexibility around GCSE options and opportunities for supervised study.

**Code of Practice**: Our approach to the detection and management of additional needs will be guided by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

(Department for Education (DfE), 2021.

**Education Health and Care plans (EHCP)**: Families and the School have the right under section 36(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014 to ask the local authority to make an assessment with a view to drawing up an EHCP. The School will always consult with families before exercising this right. If the local authority refuses to make an assessment, the families (but not the School) have a right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability).

Where a prospective student has an EHCP, we will consult with the family and, where appropriate, the local authority to ensure that the provision specified in the EHCP can be delivered by the School. We will co-operate with the local authority to ensure that relevant reviews of EHC plans are carried out as required.

Any additional services that are needed to meet the requirements of the EHCP will need to be charged to the local authority if the authority is responsible for the fees and our school is named in Section I of the EHCP. In all other circumstances, charges will be made directly to families unless the additional services can be a "reasonable adjustment" where no charge will be made, in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

**Welfare needs**: The School recognises that students with special educational needs or disabilities may be at risk of being bullied. The school has an anti-bullying policy which makes it clear that bullying behaviour of any kind is not acceptable and will be taken very seriously. If families are concerned about their child's welfare they can approach the student's form teacher or any senior member of staff to discuss their concerns in private at any time.

Additional barriers can exist when detecting the abuse or neglect of students with SEND creating additional safeguarding challenges for those involved in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of this group of students. The School is mindful in particular that:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the student's SEND without further exploration;
- students with SEND can be disproportionately impacted by bullying without outwardly showing any signs; and
- there may be communication barriers which are difficult to overcome to identify
- whether action under this policy is required.
- any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- various signposts at both schools are regularly highlighted so that students know who and where they can report any safeguarding concerns about themselves or their peers.
- **Disability**: The School recognises that some students may have a disability. The school will make all reasonable adjustments to afford opportunity to disabled students. However, if, despite such adjustments, the School is unable to provide adequately for the student's needs, the School may decline to offer a place to a student or request you withdraw your child from the School (see 5.1 below).

**Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCo):** The SENDCo has responsibility for:

- ensuring liaison with parents and other professionals in respect of a student's additional needs;
- advising and supporting other staff in the School;
- ensuring that appropriate Pupil Passports are in place;
- ensuring that relevant background information about individual children with additional needs is collected, recorded and updated;
- undertaking any other appropriate duties in accordance with the Code of Practice on SEND.

**Responsibility**: Families bear the overall responsibility for taking decisions about the management of their child's additional needs. A parent or caretaker who chooses to have a

formal assessment should make arrangements, accordingly, with the School or outside but must ensure that we are given copies of all advice and reports received.

**External teaching**: Families may opt for additional specialist teaching outside the School, provided that the Head is satisfied with your child's safety and travel arrangements and that the additional specialist teaching is at times which fit in with the remainder of the curriculum, timetable and community life of the School.

**Information**: As some additional needs are inherited it may be beneficial to the student for the School to know at the outset if (either parent or caretaker) or other children or close relations have additional needs. Confidential information of this kind will only be communicated on a "need to know" basis. Parents must also provide us with a copy of any report or recommendations which have been made in relation to additional needs at the student's previous school or elsewhere.

**Concerns**: We need to know immediately if the student's progress or behaviour causes parents any concern so that we can devise and agree a strategy with the family and implement it.

**Examinations**: Students who have been diagnosed as having additional needs may be eligible to apply for Access Arrangements in our Senior School. The School offers an assessment service in Upper IV and we ask parents to liaise with the SENDCo about arrangements. No such extra time is offered in our Junior School, although recommended strategies may well be adopted during summative assessments.

## Alternative arrangements

**Withdrawal**: We reserve the right, following consultation with the family, to ask or require the family to withdraw their child from the School if, in our opinion after making all reasonable adjustments and exhausting appropriate strategies:

- their child is in need of a formal assessment, additional specialist teaching, learning support or medication to which the parents do not consent; and / or
- the family has withheld information from the School which, had the information been provided, would have made a significant difference to the School's management of their child's additional needs; and / or their child's needs require a level of support or medication which, in the professional judgment of the Head, the School is unable to provide, manage or arrange;
- their child has additional needs that make it unlikely they will be able to benefit sufficiently from the mainstream education and facilities which we provide.

**Alternative placement**: In any of these circumstances we will do what is reasonable to help families to find an alternative placement which will provide their child with the necessary level of teaching and support.

**Financial**: Withdrawal of a student in these circumstances will not incur a charge to fees in lieu of notice. The deposit paid in respect of the student will be credited to the parents' account.