Policy Statement for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Additional Needs

Approved by:	**Trust Board**	**Date: 20.10.26**
Next review due by:	**Annually**	

1. Inclusion – Policy and Practice

1.1 Vision

Unity Schools Partnership is committed to ensuring that every pupil leaves our schools as a confident, resilient individual who is positive about their future and equipped to manage life's challenges. Having a special educational need or disability is not seen as a barrier to personal achievement; rather, it shapes how provision is designed, adapted, and reviewed so that pupils can succeed.

We believe that all pupils can make strong progress from their individual starting points. Our approach promotes independence, personal responsibility, belonging, participation, and successful preparation for adulthood.

This policy is underpinned by the SEND Code of Practice and reflects the Trust's commitment to the Department for Education's 2026 Schools White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving, and the wider SEND reform programme. The Trust is committed to provision that is inclusive by design, with needs identified early and met through high-quality, adaptive mainstream practice wherever possible.

The Trust supports the national ambition of securing the right support, in the right place, at the right time. This means ensuring children and young people receive timely, appropriate and safe provision through a graduated, evidence-informed, and collaborative approach.

1.2 Legal and policy context

This policy should be read alongside the following statutory duties, guidance, and Trust policies:

- Children and Families Act 2014, including duties relating to SEND and supporting pupils with medical conditions.
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments and to avoid discrimination arising from disability.
- SEND Code of Practice.
- Department for Education guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.
- Department for Education guidance and reform documentation linked to Every Child Achieving and Thriving, SEND reform and the Inclusive Mainstream Fund.
- Education Act 1996, including the local authority duty under Section 19 to arrange suitable education for children who cannot attend school because of illness, exclusion or otherwise.
- Trust and academy policies for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, accessibility, complaints, data protection and health and safety.

1.3 Provision across the Trust

Unity Schools Partnership provides a continuum of provision across mainstream schools, specialist hubs, and special schools. This enables pupils to access education within the most appropriate setting for their needs, while ensuring that specialist expertise is shared across the Trust.

- Mainstream schools provide inclusive, high-quality teaching and ordinarily available provision for pupils with and without SEND.
- Specialist hubs/resource bases provide targeted and specialist support for pupils whose needs require enhanced provision while maintaining links with mainstream education where appropriate.

- Special schools provide specialist education for pupils with the most complex needs, including severe learning difficulties, communication and interaction needs, and social, emotional, and mental health needs.

2. Inclusive Mainstream Fund and Inclusion Strategy

The Trust recognises the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) as a key national driver of whole-school inclusion. The IMF is intended to support mainstream settings to strengthen inclusive practice, improve universal provision, and remove commonly occurring and predictable barriers to learning.

Schools will use IMF and core funding, including the notional SEN budget where applicable, to develop inclusive systems and strengthen ordinarily available provision. The IMF will not be treated as the only resource for inclusion; it will sit alongside wider school improvement, curriculum, attendance, behaviour, pastoral and SEND priorities.

All mainstream schools within the Trust will publish and annually review an Inclusion Strategy. This strategy will set out how leaders identify the needs of their cohort, remove barriers to learning, use funding effectively and embed inclusive practice across the school.

Across the Trust, Inclusion Strategies will support schools to:

- identify and respond to commonly occurring and predictable needs within the pupil cohort;
- strengthen high-quality adaptive teaching and curriculum accessibility;
- improve early identification and intervention without unnecessary reliance on formal diagnosis;
- develop evidence-informed targeted support where universal provision alone is not sufficient;
- create inclusive environments that promote belonging, attendance, and participation;
- work in partnership with families and wider services;
- evaluate the impact of inclusion funding and provision through school and Trust quality assurance.

3. Objectives and Principles

The key objective of this policy is to enable all pupils to participate in education fully and effectively, making strong progress academically, socially, and personally.

To achieve this, all academies will:

- maintain high expectations for pupils with SEND and additional needs;
- secure early identification of barriers to learning and participation;
- ensure that class and subject teachers remain responsible and accountable for the progress and development of pupils in their classes;
- deliver high-quality, adaptive teaching as the first response to pupils who have or may have SEND;
- use the graduated approach of assess, plan, do, and review;
- involve pupils and parents/carers in decisions about support, provision, and review;
- ensure that interventions are purposeful, time-limited, evidence-informed and reviewed for impact;
- develop staff knowledge and confidence through professional development, coaching, and access to specialist advice;

- work closely with safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, pastoral, and wellbeing leads to ensure joined-up support;
- ensure that local governing bodies monitor SEND, accessibility, and inclusion, including the publication and review of the SEN Information Report and Accessibility Plan.

4. Universal and Layered Support

High-quality teaching is the foundation of SEND provision. All pupils are entitled to a clear and consistently delivered universal offer based on adaptive teaching, inclusive curriculum design, and evidence-informed practice.

Provision within the Trust is structured through a layered model of support:

- Universal: high-quality teaching, inclusive routines, accessible curriculum design, and reasonable adjustments for all pupils.
- Targeted: additional support or intervention for pupils requiring more focused help, usually delivered by school staff and reviewed through the graduated approach.
- Targeted Plus: enhanced support where needs require additional planning, advice or input from specialist staff or external agencies.
- Specialist: provision for pupils with the most complex needs, including those with EHCPs and those requiring specialist placements, packages, or highly individualised support.

This layered model supports consistency, clarity, and early response. It also ensures that pupils can move between levels of support according to need, progress, and changing circumstances.

5. Identification, Assessment and Review

5.1 Identifying SEND

A child or young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream settings.

Schools will consider whether a pupil may have SEND where, despite high-quality teaching and appropriate adaptations, they:

- make significantly slower progress than peers starting from the same baseline;
- fail to match or better their previous rate of progress;
- fail to close the attainment or developmental gap between themselves and peers;
- experience a widening attainment or participation gap;
- present with persistent barriers to engagement, communication, social interaction, emotional regulation, sensory processing, physical access, literacy, numeracy, or cognition.

The four broad areas of need are communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional, and mental health; and sensory and/or physical needs. These categories are used to support assessment and planning, but pupils may have needs across more than one area and provision should respond to the individual child rather than to a label.

5.2 Factors that are not SEND in themselves

The Trust recognises that progress and participation may be affected by factors other than SEND. These may include attendance, wellbeing, bereavement, trauma, disadvantage, English as an additional language, gaps in prior learning, health needs, or safeguarding concerns. Schools will consider the whole child and avoid assuming that underachievement is automatically the result of SEND.

Pupils who speak English as an additional language are not automatically considered to have SEND. Where concerns remain after appropriate language acquisition support, schools will consider whether there may be an underlying learning difficulty or disability.

5.3 Graduated approach

The Trust follows the graduated approach of assess, plan, do and review.

- Assess: teachers, supported by the SENCO, analyse the pupil's strengths, barriers, progress, attainment, wider development, and views. Where appropriate, this includes information from parents/carers and external professionals.
- Plan: the school agrees outcomes, provision, adjustments and review points with the pupil and parents/carers. Plans should be clear, proportionate, and understood by relevant staff.
- Do: class and subject teachers remain responsible for implementing support, including where teaching assistants or specialist staff contribute to provision.
- Review: provision is reviewed regularly, using progress information, pupil and parent/carer views, staff feedback, and evidence of impact. Adjustments are made where support is not securing the intended outcomes.

Pupils with more complex needs will usually have a one-page profile, pupil passport, individual support plan, or equivalent. This will identify strengths, needs, successful strategies, reasonable adjustments, pupil views, and intended outcomes.

6. SEND and Additional Needs Register

Each academy will maintain accurate records of pupils receiving SEND support or additional monitoring. Registers must support purposeful planning and communication; they should not be used as a substitute for high-quality assessment, teaching, or review.

- Pupils with an EHCP will be recorded on the SEND register with an E annotation.
- Pupils receiving SEN Support will be recorded with a K annotation where special educational provision is additional to or different from that normally available to pupils of the same age.
- Some pupils may be monitored where there are emerging concerns or additional needs that do not currently meet the threshold for SEN Support. Parents/carers will be involved in discussions about monitoring and next steps.

The SEND register is reviewed regularly by the SENCO and relevant leaders. Movement on or off the register will be based on evidence, discussion with parents/carers, and review of provision and progress.

7. Education, Health, and Care Plans

Where, despite appropriate assessment, planning and support, a pupil has not made expected progress, the school or parents/carers may consider requesting that the local authority carry out an Education, Health, and Care needs assessment. The school will provide evidence of action taken through SEN Support to inform local authority decision-making.

Pupils with EHCPs will receive provision in accordance with their plan. The Trust recognises its duty to use best endeavours to secure the special educational provision required by pupils with SEND and will work with the local authority to support delivery of provision specified in EHCPs.

Annual reviews will evaluate progress towards outcomes, the continued appropriateness of provision, and any changes required. From Year 9, annual reviews will include a clear focus on preparation for adulthood, including employment, further education, independent living, community inclusion, and health where appropriate.

Where a pupil with an EHCP is temporarily unable to attend school because of health, safety or another significant barrier, the Trust will work with the local authority and relevant professionals to consider how education and specified provision can continue as far as reasonably practicable. Decisions will be recorded, reviewed, and discussed with parents/carers and the pupil where appropriate.

8. Disability, Equality and Medical Needs

8.1 Disability and reasonable adjustments

Some pupils with SEN may also have a disability under the Equality Act 2010. This includes pupils with a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This definition includes sensory impairments and long-term medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and cancer.

Schools will make reasonable adjustments to avoid substantial disadvantages and will provide auxiliary aids and services where required. Adjustments may relate to curriculum access, communication, premises, equipment, assessment, attendance, behaviour approaches, personal care, or wider participation in school life.

All academies will ensure that the dignity, privacy, and independence of pupils who require personal care or physical support are protected.

8.2 Medical needs and safe attendance

The Trust complies with statutory guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions. Schools will have arrangements in place to identify pupils with medical needs, develop individual healthcare plans where required, train staff, record medication, and respond to emergencies.

Where a pupil has significant or changing medical needs, attendance should be supported by appropriate healthcare planning, staff training, risk assessment, and clear communication with parents/carers and health professionals. A pupil should not be expected to attend where the school cannot yet demonstrate that necessary safe systems are in place.

Individual Healthcare Plans will be developed in partnership with parents/carers and relevant health professionals. They will be reviewed where needs change, after significant incidents or near misses, and at planned review points.

9. Access to Education Where Pupils Cannot Attend

The Trust recognises that some pupils may be temporarily unable to attend school because of illness, medical needs, exclusion, or other reasons. The local authority has a statutory duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to arrange suitable education for children of compulsory school age who cannot attend school for such reasons.

Where a pupil is unable to access their school placement, the Trust will act promptly and constructively. This includes notifying and working with the local authority where appropriate, sharing relevant information, contributing to planning for interim education, supporting continuity of learning, and helping to plan reintegration.

Absence linked to unresolved safe attendance arrangements, significant health needs or agreed medical concerns will not be treated as elective home education or parental preference. Complaint processes, investigations, or disputes must not be treated as a substitute for education or, where applicable, EHCP provision.

10. Support Arrangements and Deployment of Staff

Support arrangements will be planned following discussion with teachers, pupils, parents/carers and, where appropriate, external professionals. Teaching assistants may work with individuals or small groups on focused learning tasks under the direction of teachers and in alignment with the curriculum.

The Trust expects teaching assistants to be deployed in ways that promote independence, access to high-quality teaching and meaningful participation. Support may include pre-teaching, post-teaching, structured interventions, scaffolding, communication support, emotional regulation support, personal care, or specialist programmes.

Only in exceptional circumstances will a teaching assistant work with an individual pupil for extended periods without planned opportunities for independence, peer interaction, and teacher-led instruction. Teachers remain responsible for the progress of pupils receiving additional support.

Where pupils are unable to access on-site provision, schools will consider how education and any specified EHCP provision can continue through alternative or interim arrangements in partnership with the local authority and relevant services.

11. Roles, Responsibilities and Accountability

11.1 Class and subject teachers

Class and subject teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of pupils in their classes, including pupils receiving SEND support or with EHCPs. They are expected to plan and deliver adaptive teaching, implement agreed strategies, monitor progress, and contribute to reviews.

11.2 SENCO

The SENCO in each academy is responsible for the strategic development and day-to-day coordination of SEND provision. The SENCO provides professional guidance to colleagues, supports the graduated approach, liaises with parents/carers and external agencies, maintains SEND records, and contributes to statutory processes.

All SENCOs will have, or be working towards, the required national qualification for SENCOs. The Trust will support SENCOs and aspiring SENCOs to remain up to date with statutory requirements, national reform, training opportunities, and effective practice.

11.3 Headteachers, senior leaders and Trust SEND Directors

Headteachers have overall responsibility for SEND and inclusion within their academies. Senior leaders ensure that SEND is embedded within curriculum, teaching, assessment, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, professional development, and school improvement.

Trust SEND Directors provide strategic support, challenge, guidance, and quality assurance across academies. They support the sharing of specialist expertise and help ensure consistency of expectation across the Trust.

11.4 Governors and trustees

Local governing bodies monitor the implementation and impact of this policy, the school's SEN Information Report, Accessibility Plan, Inclusion Strategy, and use of SEND-related funding. Each academy will identify a governor responsible for SEND and inclusion. Trustees provide strategic oversight of SEND and inclusion across the Trust.

12. Working with Parents, Carers and Pupils

Parents and carers are key partners in identifying need, planning support, and reviewing impact. Schools will value the knowledge and experience that families bring and will seek to establish professional, respectful, and transparent relationships.

Pupils will be supported to participate in decision-making about their learning, provision and outcomes in ways that are appropriate to their age, communication needs, and development. Their views will inform one-page profiles, support plans, annual reviews, and transition planning.

Parents/carers will be involved in decisions about SEND Support, monitoring arrangements, healthcare planning, interim provision, requests for statutory assessment and reviews of EHCP provision.

13. Working with Other Agencies

Academies work in partnership with professionals from education, health, care, and voluntary sector services on a needs-led basis. This may include local authority advisory services, educational psychology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, mental health services, school nursing, social care, and specialist outreach.

Where a pupil's needs require coordinated planning across education, health and care, the school will seek timely multi-agency collaboration. This includes situations where access to education is interrupted because of medical, safety, or complex needs. Plans should identify responsibilities, actions, timescales, and review arrangements.

14. Transition

Transition into school, between year groups, across key stages and into adulthood can be a significant point of change for pupils with SEND. Schools will plan transition carefully, involving pupils, parents/carers, and relevant professionals.

Early years and primary staff will liaise with pre-school settings to understand children's strengths and needs. Early identification and timely support are essential to prevent difficulties escalating and to support confidence, communication, and readiness for learning.

At transition to secondary school, information from primary schools, including assessment information and support strategies, will be shared with relevant staff. For pupils with EHCPs, secondary SENCOs will be invited to attend Year 6 annual reviews and, where possible, Year 5 reviews for pupils with complex needs.

Transition planning may include additional visits, meetings with key staff, pupil passports, visual resources, social stories, familiarisation activities, curriculum bridging work and phased support where appropriate.

15. Tracking Progress and Evaluating Impact

The tracking of progress is ongoing. Each academy will use its own assessment systems alongside Trust-wide quality assurance to monitor academic progress, wider development, attendance, engagement, behaviour and wellbeing.

- Class and subject teachers monitor progress through classwork, assessments, discussion, observation, and review of barriers to learning.
- SENCOs monitor the effectiveness of provision, interventions, and reasonable adjustments.
- Leader's review SEND outcomes through pupil progress processes, SEND audits, learning walks, pupil voice, parent/carer feedback, and staff discussion.
- Interventions are evaluated for impact, value for money, and contribution to long-term learning.
- Inclusion Strategies and SEND Self-Evaluation processes inform school and Trust improvement planning.

16. Access Arrangements for Tests and Public Examinations

In Year 6, teachers may make additional arrangements to enable pupils with specific needs to access national curriculum tests. These arrangements will reflect normal classroom practice and are intended to compensate for disadvantage, not to provide an unfair advantage.

For public examinations in Key Stages 4 and 5, access arrangements will be applied in line with Joint Council for Qualifications requirements. Applications must be supported by evidence of need and evidence that the arrangement is the pupil's normal way of working. Parents/carers and pupils will be informed and consent obtained where required.

17. Accessibility

Each academy will maintain and review an Accessibility Plan. Accessibility Plans aim to increase participation in the curriculum, improve the physical environment, and improve access to information for pupils with disabilities.

Environmental alterations, individual evacuation plans, manual handling arrangements, and specialist equipment will be considered where required. Schools will seek to anticipate barriers and remove them wherever practicable.

18. Behaviour, Attendance and Wellbeing

Positive behaviour, strong attendance, and emotional wellbeing are essential foundations for learning. Trust academies will promote calm, safe, and respectful environments where pupils feel they belong and can participate.

Where pupils present with behavioural concerns, schools will seek to understand underlying needs and context. Behaviour policies will be applied with reasonable adjustments where appropriate, taking account of SEND, disability, age, maturity, and individual circumstances.

The Trust promotes trauma-informed and relational practice. Emotional Literacy Support Assistants, mental health leads, and pastoral systems may contribute to support where emotional or social difficulties affect readiness to learn.

19. Harassment and Bullying

The Trust is committed to promoting equality and preventing all forms of bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

Pupils with SEND may be vulnerable to bullying, including where communication difficulties make it harder to report or describe events. Staff will take account of these vulnerabilities when preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying. Schools will follow safeguarding, behaviour and anti-bullying procedures, including restorative or disciplinary responses where appropriate.

20. Complaints

The Trust complaints policies are available on the Unity website. The Trust encourages concerns to be raised early with relevant staff so that issues can be resolved informally wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Where complaints relate to SEND provision, schools should ensure that records are clear, communication is timely and statutory processes, including EHCP review or local authority duties, are not delayed by the complaints process.

21. Data Protection and Confidentiality

Unity Schools Partnership and its academies comply with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information relating to a pupil's physical or mental health is sensitive personal data and will be treated with particular care.

Personal and sensitive information may be shared with professionals where this is necessary to support SEND provision, safeguarding, health, care, or statutory processes. Schools will follow Trust policies on data protection, records retention, privacy notices, and photography/video consent.

22. Monitoring and Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust. Review will take account of statutory guidance, national SEND reform, local authority arrangements, Trust quality assurance, school feedback, parent/carer feedback, and inspection findings.

References and linked guidance

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
Every Child Achieving and Thriving
Inclusive Mainstream Fund 2026 to 2027
Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school
Schools statutory guidance collection