



SPARKEN HILL  
ACADEMY

# Special Educational Needs Policy (SEND)

# Special Educational Needs and Disability

## (SEND) Policy

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If parents or carers are not satisfied with the SEND provision made for their child, they should first raise their concerns informally with the class teacher or SENCO. If the matter is not resolved, parents and carers may make a formal complaint using the school's Complaints Policy, a copy of which is available from the school office and on the school website.

Where a child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan and parents or carers are dissatisfied with the content of the plan or the provision being made, they have the right to appeal to the SEND Tribunal (SENDIST). The SENCO can provide further guidance on the mediation and appeal process. Information and support is also available from the local authority's SEND Information and Advice Support Service (SENDIASS).

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# Mission Statement

Everyone at Sparken Hill Academy is committed to creating a neurodiversity-affirming community where all neurotypes are valued and celebrated. We recognize that everyone's brain is unique, with different strengths and ways of learning. Our learning environments and teaching practices are designed from the ground up to be accessible for all learners, recognizing that what helps neurodivergent pupils often helps ALL pupils. Through inclusive environments, accessible teaching, and genuine partnership with families, we enable every child to thrive as their authentic self. We believe that neurodiversity makes our school community richer and stronger.

## 1. Aims and Objectives

We aim to provide every child with access to a broad and balanced education. This includes the National Curriculum in line with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. We recognize that approximately 1 in 7 children are neurodivergent, and our approach focuses on creating universally accessible environments and teaching practices that benefit ALL learners, rather than requiring diagnosis before providing support.

### Our aims and objectives are:

- Recognize the diverse learning needs of all pupils-through high-quality formative assessment and observation. This is done by gathering information from parents, education, health and care services if possible before the pupil starts school.
- Create universally accessible learning environments and teaching approaches that reduce barriers for all learners using intervention and resources effectively. Our Quality First Teaching incorporates strategies that benefit neurodivergent learners including visual supports, movement breaks, sensory regulation opportunities, and clear routines. SENCO and teachers will monitor that targets are being met and all pupils' needs are being catered for.
- Use a variety of teaching styles, and cater for different learning styles to allow children to access the National Curriculum. We employ principles to ensure curriculum and teaching methods are accessible to all learners from the outset.
- Monitor the progress of all pupils to help identify pupils who may need additional support. Continuous monitoring by their teachers will support pupils their potential.
- Work with parents as equal partners and experts in their children. We recognize parent carers as key partners in shaping whole-school SEND provision through co-production rather than consultation. School will report back on pupil's progress and provisions used.

- Work with the support of outside agencies when the pupils' needs cannot be met by the school alone. This includes specialist health and education professionals who provide training and support to build our whole-school capacity to meet neurodivergent learners' needs.
- Create a school environment where pupils feel safe to voice their opinions of their own needs. Pupils regularly talk with their teachers discussing their progress with encouragement to make decisions. We recognize that communication differences may require varied approaches to gathering pupil voice, and we actively seek to understand the perspectives of all learners including those who are non-speaking or have communication differences.
- Ensure vulnerable pupils i.e., pupils who are looked after, have free school dinners, Gypsy Roma Traveller pupils who are under social care or have health issues or persistent absentees receive the support needed to achieve. We pay particular attention to the intersection of disadvantage and neurodivergence, recognizing that neurodivergent learners may be disproportionately represented among vulnerable groups.
- Build a neurodiversity-affirming school culture where all neurotypes are understood, accepted, and celebrated. We educate all pupils about brain differences and challenge stigma and bullying related to neurodivergence.
- Ensure support is needs-based rather than diagnosis-dependent. We recognize that many neurodivergent children do not have formal diagnoses, and waiting for diagnosis should not delay appropriate support.

## 2. Responsibility for the Coordination of SEND

### Provision

- The person responsible for overseeing the education and co-ordinating the day to day provision for children with SEND is the SENCO. At Sparken Hill, we have two – Miss Jess Parker and Mrs Jodie Reay. However, meeting the needs of neurodivergent and other SEND pupils is a whole-school responsibility requiring commitment from all staff.
- The SENCOs liaise with professionals from beyond the school setting and seeks their advice for assessment and programmes of work, and training to build whole-school capacity:

Educational Psychologists

Bassetlaw Primary Behaviour Partnership (BPBP Ltd) and Nottinghamshire SEMH Team

School and Family Support Service

Medical Officers

Speech Therapists

Physiotherapists

1. Hearing Impairment Services
2. Visual Impairment services
3. Social services
4. Occupational Therapists (particularly for sensory environment support)
5. Autism and ADHD specialist services (through C&I Team)

### 3. Arrangements for Coordinating SEND Provision

The SENCO(s) hold details of all SEND Support records including provision maps, IEPs, assessments, minutes from meetings and records for individual pupils. The SENCOs also maintains documentation of whole-school approaches, environmental audits, and parent carer engagement activities.

To ensure all staff members have complete up to date information they can access on the staff IT system:

- Sparken Hill Academy SEND Policy
- A copy of the whole school SEND list
- Guidance on identification in the Code of Practice (SEND Support and pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans)
- Information on individual pupils' special educational needs, including targets set and copies of their pupil passports, assessments, personal behaviour plans or provision maps
- Practical advice, teaching strategies, and information about types of special educational needs and disabilities
- Neurodiversity-informed teaching strategies and environmental adaptations that benefit all learners
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidance and Quality First Teaching resources
- Sensory environment guidelines and regulation strategies
- Information available through Nottinghamshire's SEND Local Offer and information about the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme if applicable to our area

## **4. Admission Arrangements**

The admission arrangements for all pupils are in accordance with national legislation, including the Equality Act 2010. This includes children with any level of SEND; those with Education, Health and Care Plans and those without. We actively welcome neurodivergent learners and those with other SEND, recognizing that appropriate support does not depend on formal diagnosis.

If the school is alerted to the fact a child may be identified as having Special Educational Needs, we will endeavour to collect relevant information from such sources as the pre-school, early years support service, previous school or health visitor to prepare for a smooth transition to the school. We particularly seek information about any sensory, communication, or regulation support that has been helpful, regardless of whether a formal diagnosis exists.

## 5. Specialist SEND Provision

Sparken Hill Academy is committed to whole-school inclusion and celebrates neurodiversity. Our school community includes learners with diverse neurotypes including autistic children, those with ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette's, and other learning differences. We also support pupils with speech and language needs, physical disabilities, sensory impairments, and medical conditions.

We view neurodivergence as natural variation in human neurology, not as deficits or problems to be fixed. Our focus is on creating environments and teaching practices that are accessible for all neurotypes. With approximately 80+ potentially neurodivergent learners in our school (based on 1 in 7 prevalence), we recognize that many of these pupils may not have formal diagnoses. Support is based on need, not diagnosis.

We recognize that neurodivergent learners bring unique strengths including creativity, pattern recognition, attention to detail, passionate interests, and different ways of thinking that enrich our school community.

## **6. Facilities for Pupils with SEND**

### **Access to the School Environment**

In line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014, the Principal and Governing Body ensure that an Accessibility Plan is in place to ensure full accessibility to the school site. Reasonable adjustments are made on an ongoing basis to remove barriers for disabled pupils, staff and visitors.

#### **Physical Environment:**

Sparken Hill Academy has easy access to all areas, both inside and outside, for children with mobility or visual problems. There are accessible toilets and bathroom facilities which include a height-adjustable changing bed and a sensory room. Ramps have been installed where classroom doors open into the playground and there is a lift between different floors.

#### **Assistive Technology:**

School has purchased additional aids and resources which help pupils to access all learning opportunities. All pupils within KS2 have access to an individual iPad. We provide access to assistive technology including text-to-speech, speech-to-text, visual timers, and other tools that support neurodivergent learners.

#### **Increased Access to the Curriculum:**

Application is made for pupils with specific needs to receive support with e.g. increased size of print, additional time or readers if allowed.

#### **School Transport:**

School has 2 minibusses (one of which has been modified for wheelchair access.)

## 6a. Sensory and Environmental Design

Sparken Hill Academy recognizes that the sensory environment significantly impacts learning, particularly for neurodivergent pupils. Many neurodivergent learners experience sensory processing differences that affect their ability to engage with learning when environments are overwhelming or under-stimulating. We are committed to creating sensory-friendly environments throughout our school.

### Classroom Environments:

- Consideration of lighting (reduction of fluorescent flicker where possible, natural light prioritized, adjustable lighting in some spaces)
- Acoustic management (soft furnishings to reduce echo, quiet spaces available, noise-cancelling headphones accessible)
- Visual clarity (reduced visual clutter in learning spaces, clear visual boundaries, organized materials)
- Flexible seating options (wobble cushions, standing desks where appropriate, varied seating types)
- Access to fidget tools and movement breaks embedded in routines
- Clear visual systems (visual timetables, now/next boards, visual task instructions)

### Whole-School Environments:

- Quiet spaces available throughout the school day for regulation
- Regulation zones in classrooms and communal areas with sensory tools
- Clear visual wayfinding and environmental signage
- Sensory-friendly assembly options (reduced volume, dimmed lights available, exit strategies for overwhelm)
- Structured playground zones (active play areas and quiet areas clearly designated)
- Lunchtime environmental considerations (managing noise levels, providing quieter eating spaces)

### Environmental Audit and Development:

We conduct regular environmental audits through the lens of sensory accessibility, incorporating feedback from:

- Pupil voice (particularly from neurodivergent learners)
- Parent carer feedback
- Staff observations

- Specialist advice from occupational therapists and sensory integration specialists

## **7. Allocation of Resources for Pupils with SEND**

The school receives funding for SEND support which is allocated based on pupil needs.

Resources include: environmental adaptations, sensory tools, assistive technology, training for staff, and specialist assessments.

We prioritize funding for whole-school approaches that benefit multiple learners over individual interventions, in line with the PINS philosophy of building universally accessible environments.

## 8. Identification of Pupils' Needs

At Sparken Hill Academy, we recognize that all children learn differently. Our first and most important approach is ensuring high-quality, accessible teaching for ALL pupils through Quality First Teaching and Universal Design for Learning principles (see Section 8a). We provide graduated support based on need, not diagnosis, recognizing that many neurodivergent pupils do not have formal diagnoses.

Early identification of pupils who may need additional support comes through:

- High-quality formative assessment integrated into daily teaching that recognizes diverse presentations of learning differences
- Observation of pupils in different contexts (classroom, playground, transitions), recognizing that neurodivergent pupils may mask differences in some settings
- Partnership with parents as experts in their children, sharing information about home presentation which may differ from school
- Understanding of different presentations including internalizing vs. externalizing responses, masking behaviours, and situational demand avoidance

We recognize that traditional 'identification' approaches can delay support while waiting for formal assessment or diagnosis. Our focus is on removing barriers and providing support as soon as a need is recognized, regardless of whether a diagnosis exists.

### 8a. Universal Design for Learning and Quality First Teaching

At Sparken Hill Academy, we employ Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure our curriculum and teaching methods are accessible to all learners from the outset, rather than requiring adaptations after barriers are identified. This approach benefits ALL pupils, not just those with identified SEND.

#### The Three Principles of UDL:

- Multiple means of representation: Presenting information in varied ways (visual, auditory, practical demonstration, written) so that all learners can access content
- Multiple means of engagement: Offering choice in how pupils engage with learning, recognizing different interests, challenges, and motivators
- Multiple means of action and expression: Flexible ways for pupils to demonstrate their learning, not limited to written work

# Quality First Teaching at Sparken Hill Academy:

Our Quality First Teaching incorporates strategies that particularly benefit neurodivergent learners, including:

- Visual supports (visual timetables, task boards, visual instructions) available to all learners
- Movement breaks and regulation opportunities integrated into lessons
- Clear, predictable routines with advance notice of changes
- Explicit teaching of executive function skills (organization, planning, time management)
- Reduced language load in instructions with checking for understanding
- Flexible presentation of tasks allowing for different working styles
- Recognition and accommodation of sensory needs
- Co-regulation support before expecting self-regulation

This universal approach means that many learners' needs are met through excellent teaching and accessible environments, reducing the need for individual intervention plans except where highly specific support is needed.

## **9. Access to the Curriculum, Information and Associated Services**

All pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Through our Universal Design for Learning approach (see Section 8a), the curriculum is designed from the outset to be accessible for all learners, including neurodivergent pupils. Teachers differentiate learning opportunities to meet individual needs. This includes providing scaffolding, alternative presentation formats, extended processing time, and varied output methods as standard practice.

## **10. Inclusion of Pupils with SEND**

All pupils are valued members of our school community. We believe in moving beyond 'inclusion' to genuine belonging, where neurodivergent pupils are not merely 'included' but are celebrated as essential parts of our community with unique contributions to make.

### **10a. Creating a Neurodiversity-Affirming Culture**

Sparken Hill Academy actively cultivates understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity throughout our school community:

- Age-appropriate curriculum content about brain differences and neurodiversity
- Celebration of neurodivergent role models and their achievements in assemblies and displays
- Anti-bullying policy with explicit content addressing neurodiversity-related bullying
- Peer education programmes building understanding of different ways of thinking and learning
- Language choices throughout school that affirm and celebrate difference rather than pathologizing it
- Visible leadership commitment to neurodiversity inclusion demonstrated in school values and actions
- Recognition that neurodivergent pupils bring unique strengths including different problem-solving approaches, creativity, attention to detail, and passionate expertise

## **10b. Mental Health, Regulation and Wellbeing**

Sparken Hill Academy recognizes the intersection between neurodivergence and mental health. Neurodivergent children experience significantly higher rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health difficulties, often related to masking, sensory overload, social confusion, unmet support needs, and experiences of stigma or bullying.

### **Regulation Support:**

- Understanding that behaviour is communication - all behaviour tells us something about a child's internal state or unmet needs
- Co-regulation before self-regulation - providing adult support to help children regulate before expecting independent regulation
- Sensory regulation tools available to all learners without stigma
- Movement and brain breaks integrated into routines
- Individual regulation plans developed with pupils and families where needed

### **Mental Health Awareness:**

- Recognition of masking (suppressing authentic self to fit in) and its exhausting impact on neurodivergent learners
- Understanding of autistic burnout and ADHD overwhelm
- Support for anxiety specific to neurodivergent profiles (social anxiety, uncertainty anxiety, transitions)
- Trauma-informed practice recognizing that many neurodivergent learners have experienced educational trauma
- Early identification of emerging mental health needs with swift access to support

### **Wellbeing Approaches:**

- Safe spaces for regulation available throughout the school day
- Trusted adult system where every pupil has identified supportive adults
- Flexible approaches to demands when overwhelm occurs - reducing demands rather than increasing consequences
- Partnership with parents in supporting wellbeing with clear communication about regulation states
- Clear pathways to mental health support services including school counsellor, Educational Psychology, CAMHS

## 11. Evaluating the Success of Provision

The success of the policy will result in the needs of all children with SEND being met. We evaluate success not only through academic progress but also through wellbeing indicators, attendance, engagement, and feedback from pupils and families.

Key indicators include:

- Pupil wellbeing and sense of belonging
- Reduction in exclusions and suspensions for neurodivergent learners
- Parent carer satisfaction with partnership and co-production
- Staff confidence in supporting neurodivergent learners
- Environmental accessibility as measured through audits

## **13. In-Service Training (CPD)**

We aim to keep all school staff up to date with relevant training and developments in teaching practice in relation to the needs of pupils with SEND. All staff receive regular neurodiversity-informed training as a core component of our CPD programme.

### **Neurodiversity-Informed Training Programme:**

All staff receive regular training in:

- Understanding neurodivergence (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette's, DCD, and others)
- Recognizing diverse presentations including masking behaviours, internalizing vs. externalizing responses, and gender differences in presentation
- Sensory processing differences and environmental impact on learning
- Co-regulation strategies and emotional support approaches
- Communication differences and adaptations for diverse communication needs
- Executive function support across the curriculum
- Trauma-informed practice
- Challenging outdated assumptions, stereotypes, and deficit-based thinking about neurodivergence
- Universal Design for Learning and Quality First Teaching implementation

Training priorities are informed by staff self-assessment, parent carer feedback, current evidence and guidance, and pupil voice. We commit to annual neurodiversity training for all staff as a minimum, with termly updates on emerging research and practice.

### **Leadership and Governance:**

- Senior leadership team receive advanced neurodiversity training to embed inclusive practice across school leadership
- SEND Governor undertakes specialist CPD in neurodiversity and SEND policy
- All governors receive annual neurodiversity awareness training

### **Specialist Support:**

Where applicable through PINS programme or other partnerships, we access specialist health and education professionals including occupational therapists, educational psychologists, autism/ADHD specialists to provide training and build our capacity to support neurodivergent learners.

## **15. Working in Partnership with Parents**

Sparken Hill Academy believes that genuine partnership and co-production with parents is vital in order to ensure early and accurate identification and assessment of SEND leading to the correct intervention and provision, continuing social and academic progress of children with SEND, and personal and academic targets are set and met effectively.

Parents of children with SEND are active partners of the provision that is being made for their children. We recognize parents as experts in their children and value their insights about what works at home, how their child presents in different environments, and their aspirations for their child's future.

Parent engagement includes:

- Termly review meetings as standard, with more frequent contact where beneficial
- Parent carer forums and engagement groups (see Section 15a)
- Co-production of support strategies rather than school-led decision making
- Accessible communication in parent's preferred format

## **15a. Parent Carer Co-Production and Voice**

Sparken Hill Academy recognizes parent carers as experts in their children's needs and equal partners in shaping our SEND provision. We operate a parent carer engagement model that goes beyond consultation to genuine co-production:

### **Parent Carer Engagement Structures:**

- Termly parent carer meetings for families of neurodivergent and SEND learners to share experiences and shape provision
- Parent carer representation in SEND strategic planning and policy review
- Annual parent carer surveys informing school development priorities
- Parent carer coffee mornings and informal engagement opportunities
- Co-production of individual support strategies, environmental adaptations, and transition plans
- Links with local Parent Carer Forum where available

### **Parent Voice Shaping School Development:**

Parent carer voice directly influences:

- SEND policy review and development
- Accessibility planning and environmental improvements
- Staff training priorities and content
- Environmental audit processes
- Communication approaches and home-school partnerships

This aligns with PINS programme requirements for parent carer engagement as a core strand of support, recognizing that strong parent-school partnerships are essential for positive outcomes.

## 18. PINS Framework and Self-Assessment

### 19. SEND Reform: Looking Ahead

Sparken Hill Academy aligns our SEND provision with the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) framework. The PINS programme, funded by the Department for Education and NHS England, brings specialist health and education professionals and expert parent carers into mainstream primary schools to improve outcomes for neurodivergent pupils.

### PINS Programme Principles:

- Support is needs-based, not diagnosis-dependent
- Focus on whole-school approaches rather than individual interventions
- Building inclusive environments benefits ALL learners
- Parent carer co-production is essential
- Strengthening knowledge and skills across whole staff team

### Six PINS Domains for Self-Assessment:

We regularly assess our provision against six high-level domains:

6. 1. Leadership, Culture and Values - Our commitment to neurodiversity-affirming practice, visible leadership, and inclusive culture (see Sections 10a and Mission Statement)
7. 2. Mental Health - Our approaches to regulation, wellbeing, and mental health support for neurodivergent learners (see Section 10b)
8. 3. Readiness to Learn - How we support executive function, transitions, routines, and preparation for learning
9. 4. Teaching and Learning - Our Universal Design for Learning and Quality First Teaching approaches (see Section 8a and 9)
10. 5. Environment - Our sensory-friendly environments and physical accessibility (see Section 6 and 6a)
11. 6. Communication - Our parent carer co-production and partnership approaches (see Section 15 and 15a)

### Self-Assessment and Development:

We undertake annual self-assessment using the PINS framework, incorporating:

- Staff self-assessment and feedback
- Parent carer surveys and voice

- Pupil voice including from neurodivergent learners
- Observations and audits

This self-assessment informs our school development priorities and training needs, ensuring continuous improvement in our support for neurodivergent learners.

If PINS programme becomes available in our ICB area (Nottinghamshire), we are positioned to participate and benefit from specialist support to further enhance our provision.

## 19. SEND Reform: Looking Ahead

In February 2026, the DfE published the Schools White Paper 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' alongside the SEND reform consultation 'Putting Children and Young People First' (open for consultation until 18 May 2026). These documents set out the government's ten-year vision for a more inclusive mainstream school system. While the reforms require legislative change and are not expected to come into full effect until September 2029, the current SEND Code of Practice (2015) remains in force and Sparken Hill Academy continues to meet all existing statutory duties.

The proposed reforms introduce a new four-tier model of support:

**Universal** – high-quality inclusive teaching and accessible environments provided for all pupils as a baseline expectation of every mainstream school;

**Targeted** – additional support in mainstream settings (e.g. small group provision, speech and language input, curriculum adaptations) without the need for lengthy assessments;

**Targeted Plus** – more intensive mainstream support drawing on specialist services, for children with more complex needs;

**Specialist** – specialist provision, underpinned by Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) reserved for children with the most complex needs, supported by new Specialist Provision Packages.

Sparken Hill Academy welcomes the direction of travel and notes the following key incoming developments, which this policy will be updated to reflect as reforms are confirmed:

**Inclusive Mainstream Fund** – £1.6 billion over three years from 2026–27, providing additional funding directly to mainstream schools to support inclusive practice.

**Experts at Hand** – a new £1.8 billion service bringing educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, and other specialist professionals directly into mainstream schools.

**Digital Individual Support Plans (ISPs)** – all mainstream schools will be required to create digital ISPs for every child with identified SEND, replacing the current range of paper-based documentation.

**Inclusion Strategy** – all schools will be required to publish an annual Inclusion Strategy setting out how resources are used to benefit children with SEND and how inclusive practice is embedded across the school.

**National Inclusion Standards** – new evidence-based standards setting out what universal and targeted support should look like in every mainstream setting, to be developed by 2028.

Sparken Hill Academy's existing approaches to Universal Design for Learning, PINS-aligned self-assessment, and parent carer co-production position the school well to meet these incoming requirements. This policy will be updated as the legislative framework develops. Schools seeking to contribute their views on the proposed reforms may do so via the government's consultation, open until 18 May 2026.

## Policy Approval

Signed:  \_\_\_\_\_ Richard Lilley (Principal)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs J Parker (SENCo)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs S Sparks (SEN Governor)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This policy will be reviewed annually. Annual review will include assessment against PINS framework domains and incorporation of parent carer feedback.