



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

Excellence and Enjoyment in Education for Everyone.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy

Meeting the needs of every learner, through a distributed phase SENCO team,
inclusive teaching and genuine partnership with families

2026-27

Document control

Document	Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy
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Related documents	SEND Information Report (Local Offer) 2026-27; Accessibility Plan 2026-2029; Inclusion Strategy 2026-27; Complaints Policy; Relationships and Behaviour Regulation Policy

Summary of changes

Section	What has changed
Cover and footer	Rebuilt in the 2026-27 house style. School postcode corrected to S80 1AW.
2. Responsibility for coordination	Two named SENCOs replaced by the distributed phase SENCO team (FS, KS1, LKS2, UKS2), matching the SEND Information Report 2026-27. Roles of the Principal and SEND Trustee added.
3. Arrangements	IEPs replaced by learning plans recorded on TES Provision Map. Notts Help Yourself Local Offer link added.
5. Specialist provision	Sparklers Enhanced Provision Unit (Communication and Interaction, Reception to Year 3) added. Neurodivergence estimate updated for 517 pupils on roll.
6. Facilities	“Governing Body” replaced by Board of Trustees; Accessibility Plan 2026-2029 named; minibus details aligned with the Information Report.
7-11	Funding routes (AFN/HLN), phase SENCO involvement in identification, termly provision reviews and Trustee reporting added. “Differentiate” replaced by “adapt”. Wellbeing support now names Bright Start therapeutic play and ELSAs.

Section	What has changed
12. Complaints	Section restored to the body of the policy. First contact is now the phase SENCO; Ask Us Nottinghamshire (SENDIASS) and the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) named; disagreement resolution and mediation added.
13. Training	NPQ for SENCOs requirement for newly appointed SENCOs added.
14, 16, 17	Sections listed in the contents but previously empty, now written from the SEND Information Report 2026-27.
18. Self-assessment	All references to the PINS programme removed; the framework is described as the school's own.
Throughout	UK spelling used throughout; "governors" replaced by "Trustees".

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Mission Statement

Our school mission statement is: 'Excellence and Enjoyment in Education for Everyone.'

Everyone at Sparken Hill Academy is committed to creating a neurodiversity-affirming community where all neurotypes are valued and celebrated. We recognise 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, recognising 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.

Our commitment is simple: "If a child doesn't learn the way we teach, we teach the way a child learns."

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 SEND Code of Practice. We recognise 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 a diagnosis before support is provided.

Our aims and objectives are to:

- Recognise the diverse learning needs of all pupils through high-quality formative assessment and observation, gathering information from parents and from education, health and care services, where possible before the pupil starts school.
- Create universally accessible learning environments and teaching approaches that reduce barriers for all learners, using interventions and resources effectively. Our Quality First Teaching includes strategies that benefit neurodivergent learners, such as visual supports, movement breaks, sensory regulation opportunities and clear routines. The SENCO team and teachers monitor that targets are being met and that all pupils' needs are catered for.
- Use a range of teaching approaches so that every child can access the National Curriculum, applying principles that make the curriculum and teaching methods accessible to all learners from the outset.
- Monitor the progress of all pupils to identify those who may need additional support, so that every pupil is supported to reach their potential.
- Work with parents as equal partners and as experts in their children, recognising parent carers as key partners in shaping whole-school SEND provision through co-production rather than consultation, and reporting back on pupils' progress and the provision used.
- Work with outside agencies when pupils' needs cannot be met by the school alone, including specialist health and education professionals who provide training and support to build whole-school capacity.

- Create a school environment where pupils feel safe to voice their views about their own needs. Pupils talk regularly with their teachers about their progress and are encouraged to make decisions. We recognise that communication differences may require varied approaches to gathering pupil voice, and we actively seek the perspectives of all learners, including those who are non-speaking or have communication differences.
- Ensure that vulnerable pupils, including pupils who are looked after, eligible for free school meals, from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds, known to social care, with health needs or persistently absent, receive the support they need to achieve. We pay particular attention to the intersection of disadvantage and neurodivergence.
- Build a neurodiversity-affirming school culture in which all neurotypes are understood, accepted and celebrated, teaching all pupils about brain differences and challenging stigma and bullying related to neurodivergence.
- Ensure that support is needs-based rather than diagnosis-dependent. Many neurodivergent children do not have a formal diagnosis, and waiting for one should not delay appropriate support.

2. Responsibility for the coordination of SEND provision

Sparken Hill Academy has a distributed SENCO team, with a SENCO for each phase of the school. This means every family has a named contact who knows their child's stage of education well, and the SENCO team works together to coordinate provision across the whole academy.

Phase	SENCO
Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception)	Poppy Thompson
Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2)	Jordan Mercer
Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4)	Jessica Parker and Jodie Reay
Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 and 6)	Mercedes O'Malley

All SENCOs can be contacted through the school office on 01909 534060 or at office@sparkenhill.com.

Each phase SENCO oversees the day-to-day provision for pupils with SEND in their phase, supports class teachers with identification and planning, leads review meetings with families, and liaises with external professionals. The Principal holds overall responsibility for SEND provision, and the SEND Trustee, Mrs S Sparks, meets regularly with the SENCO team on behalf of the Board of Trustees. Meeting the needs of neurodivergent and other pupils with SEND is, however, a whole-school responsibility that requires commitment from all staff.

The SENCO team works with professionals from beyond the school, seeking their advice on assessment, programmes of support and training to build whole-school capacity, including:

- Educational Psychologists
- Bassetlaw Primary Behaviour Partnership (BPBP Ltd) and the Nottinghamshire SEMH Team
- School and Family Support Service
- Medical Officers
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Hearing Impairment Services
- Visual Impairment Services
- Social care
- Occupational Therapists (particularly for sensory environment support)
- Autism and ADHD specialist services (through the Communication and Interaction Team)

3. Arrangements for coordinating SEND provision

The SENCO team maintains a provision map using TES Provision Map, recording the pupils who need additional support, the provision in place and each pupil's learning plan. The team also holds SEN Support records, including assessments, minutes of review meetings and individual pupil records, together with documentation of whole-school approaches, environmental audits and parent carer engagement.

So that all staff have complete, up-to-date information, the following are available on the staff IT system:

- The Sparken Hill Academy SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
- The whole-school SEND list
- Guidance on identification in the SEND Code of Practice (SEN Support and pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans)
- Information on individual pupils' special educational needs, including targets, learning plans, pupil passports, assessments and personal behaviour plans
- Practical advice, teaching strategies and information about types of SEND
- 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 from Nottinghamshire's SEND Local Offer on the Notts Help Yourself website (www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/send) and other local and national SEND support initiatives

4. Admission arrangements

Admission arrangements for all pupils are in accordance with national legislation, including the Equality Act 2010. This includes children with any level of SEND, both

those with Education, Health and Care Plans and those without. We actively welcome neurodivergent learners and those with other SEND, recognising that appropriate support does not depend on a formal diagnosis.

If the school is told that a child joining us may have special educational needs, we gather relevant information from the pre-school, early years support service, previous school or health visitor to prepare for a smooth transition. We particularly seek information about any sensory, communication or regulation support that has been helpful, whether or not 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 and 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, across all four broad areas of need in the SEND Code of Practice.

We view neurodivergence as natural variation in human neurology, not as a deficit to be fixed. Our focus is on environments and teaching that are accessible for all neurotypes. Based on a prevalence of around 1 in 7, around 70 or more of our 517 pupils may be neurodivergent, and many will not have a formal diagnosis. Support is based on need, not diagnosis.

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

Sparklers Enhanced Provision Unit

Sparklers, our specialist provision for children in Reception to Year 3, has been awarded Enhanced Provision Unit (EPU) status by Nottinghamshire County Council as a Communication and Interaction provision serving Bassetlaw ("where every child shines"). It offers up to eight places for children whose needs require a highly structured, small-group setting. Children in Sparklers are taught in a calm environment with a curriculum built around communication, regulation and independence, and spend planned time learning alongside their mainstream peers. The EPU also brings specialist Communication and Interaction expertise into the wider school and works with families and schools across Bassetlaw.

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 Board of Trustees have adopted an Accessibility Plan (2026–2029) setting out how we will continue to improve access to the curriculum, the premises and information for disabled pupils. Reasonable adjustments are made on an ongoing basis to remove barriers for disabled pupils, staff and visitors.

Physical environment. Sparken Hill Academy provides access to all internal and external areas for pupils with mobility or visual impairments. There are accessible toilet and bathroom facilities, including a height-adjustable changing bed, and a dedicated sensory room. Ramps have been installed where classroom doors open onto the playground, and a lift provides access between floors.

Assistive technology. The school provides additional aids and resources to help pupils access all learning opportunities. All pupils in Key Stage 2 have access to an individual iPad, and we provide assistive technology including text-to-speech, speech-to-text and visual timers.

Access arrangements. We apply for access arrangements in national tests where appropriate, such as enlarged print, additional time or a reader where permitted.

Transport. The school owns two 17-seater minibuses, one of which is adapted with wheelchair access.

6a. Sensory and environmental design

Sparken Hill Academy recognises that the sensory environment has a significant impact on learning, particularly for neurodivergent pupils, many of whom experience sensory processing differences. We are committed to creating sensory-friendly environments throughout school.

Classroom environments

- Consideration of lighting: reducing fluorescent flicker where possible, prioritising natural light and providing adjustable lighting in some spaces
- Acoustic management: soft furnishings to reduce echo, quiet spaces, and noise-cancelling headphones
- Visual clarity: reduced visual clutter, clear visual boundaries and organised materials
- Flexible seating, such as wobble cushions, standing desks where appropriate and varied seating types
- Access to fidget tools, with movement breaks built into routines
- Clear visual systems, such as visual timetables, now/next boards and 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 signage
- Sensory-friendly assembly options, such as reduced volume, dimmed lights and agreed exit strategies
- Structured playground zones, with active and quiet areas clearly designated
- Lunchtime adjustments, such as managing noise levels and providing quieter eating spaces

Environmental audit and development

We carry out regular environmental audits through the lens of sensory accessibility, drawing on pupil voice (particularly from neurodivergent learners), parent carer feedback, staff observations and 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 according to pupils' needs. Resources include environmental adaptations, sensory tools, assistive technology, staff training and specialist assessments. We prioritise whole-school approaches that benefit many learners, in line with our commitment to universally accessible environments.

For pupils with the most complex needs, the school may apply for additional funding through Nottinghamshire's Additional Family Needs (AFN) or High Level Needs (HLN) funding. Applications are considered by a multi-agency panel, and support is reviewed and adjusted following each funding decision. Where a pupil's needs require it, the school will work with parents to request an Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment.

8. Identification of pupils' needs

At Sparken Hill Academy, we recognise that all children learn differently. Our first and most important approach is high-quality, accessible teaching for all pupils through Quality First Teaching and Universal Design for Learning (see section 8a). We provide graduated support based on need, not diagnosis.

Pupils' progress is monitored through termly assessments and pupil progress meetings led by the senior leadership team, where class teachers discuss any concerns with their phase SENCO. Early identification of pupils who may need additional support comes through:

- Concerns raised by parents, who are encouraged to speak first to their child's class teacher
- High-quality formative assessment built into daily teaching, recognising diverse presentations of learning differences
- Observation of pupils in different contexts (classroom, playground, transitions), recognising that neurodivergent pupils may mask differences in some settings
- Partnership with parents as experts in their children, including how their child presents at home
- Understanding of different presentations, including internalising and externalising responses, masking and demand avoidance

Once a need is identified, a meeting involving the phase SENCO, relevant staff and parents agrees the outcomes we want for the pupil and the support needed to achieve them. Traditional identification approaches can delay support while waiting for assessment or diagnosis, so our focus is on removing barriers as soon as a need is recognised.

8a. Universal Design for Learning and Quality First Teaching

We use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles so that our curriculum and teaching are accessible to all learners from the outset, rather than adapted only 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 and written) so that all learners can access content.
- **Multiple means of engagement:** offering choice in how pupils engage with learning, recognising different interests, challenges and motivators.
- **Multiple means of action and expression:** flexible ways for pupils to show their learning, not limited to written work.

Quality First Teaching at Sparken Hill Academy

Our Quality First Teaching includes strategies that particularly benefit neurodivergent learners:

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

This universal approach means many learners' needs are met through excellent teaching and accessible environments, reducing the need for individual 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 Universal Design for Learning (see section 8a), the curriculum is designed from the outset to be accessible for all learners. Teachers adapt their teaching to meet individual needs, providing scaffolding, alternative presentation formats, extended processing time and varied ways of recording as standard practice. Where pupils are working below their peers, teachers adjust their teaching to close gaps, including revisiting learning from previous year groups.

10. Inclusion of pupils with SEND

All pupils are valued members of our school community. We aim to move beyond 'inclusion' to genuine belonging, where neurodivergent pupils are celebrated as essential members of our community with unique contributions to make. All pupils are included in activities outside the classroom: pre-visits and risk assessments are completed for every educational visit, identifying any pupils who need individual support.

10a. Creating a neurodiversity-affirming culture

Sparken Hill Academy actively builds understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity throughout our community through:

- Age-appropriate curriculum content about brain differences and neurodiversity
- Celebration of neurodivergent role models in assemblies and displays
- An anti-bullying approach that explicitly addresses neurodiversity-related bullying
- Peer education that builds understanding of different ways of thinking and learning
- Language choices that affirm and celebrate difference rather than pathologising it
- Visible leadership commitment to neurodiversity inclusion in our values and actions
- Recognition of the strengths neurodivergent pupils bring, including different problem-solving approaches, creativity, attention to detail and passionate expertise

10b. Mental health, regulation and wellbeing

Sparken Hill Academy recognises the link between neurodivergence and mental health. Neurodivergent children experience significantly higher rates of anxiety 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
- Sensory regulation tools available to all learners without stigma
- Movement and brain breaks built into routines
- Individual regulation plans developed with pupils and families where needed

Mental health awareness

- Recognition of masking and its exhausting impact on neurodivergent learners
- Understanding of autistic burnout and ADHD overwhelm

- Support for anxiety linked to neurodivergent profiles, such as social anxiety, uncertainty and transitions
- Trauma-informed practice
- Early identification of emerging mental health needs, with swift access to support

Wellbeing approaches

- Safe spaces for regulation throughout the school day
- A trusted adult system, so 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
- A structured PSHE programme, two Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) and the “Bright Start” therapeutic play service
- Assessment tools including the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), the Boxall Profile and emotional literacy assessments
- Clear pathways to specialist support, including Educational Psychology and CAMHS

11. Evaluating the success of provision

The success of this policy will be seen in the needs of all children with SEND being met. Provision recorded on TES Provision Map is reviewed termly, and provision is adjusted where it is not having the intended impact. The SENCO team and senior leaders carry out regular SEND monitoring, including case sampling, lesson visits and reviews of pupils’ work, and report on the quality and impact of SEND provision to the Board of Trustees.

We evaluate success through academic progress, wellbeing, attendance, engagement, and feedback from pupils and families. Key indicators include:

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

12. Complaints procedure

We encourage parents and carers to raise any concerns about SEND provision promptly, starting with their child’s class teacher. If the matter needs further attention, parents can speak to the SENCO for their child’s phase or a senior member of staff. In most cases, discussion leads to an agreed solution.

If concerns remain unresolved, parents and carers may make a formal complaint using the school's Complaints Policy, which is available on the school website and from the school office.

Free, impartial and confidential advice is available from **Ask Us Nottinghamshire**, the local SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS), on 0800 121 7772 or at askusnotts.org.uk.

For matters relating to EHC needs assessments or EHC Plans, parents can use the local authority's disagreement resolution and mediation arrangements, and have a right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability). The phase SENCO can explain these routes.

13. In-service training (CPD)

We aim to keep all staff up to date with training and developments in teaching pupils with SEND. All staff receive regular neurodiversity-informed training as a core part of our CPD programme. Members of our SENCO team hold the National Award for SEN Co-ordination, and newly appointed SENCOs are supported to complete the National Professional Qualification (NPQ) for SENCOs within the statutory timeframe.

Neurodiversity-informed training programme

All staff receive regular training in:

- Understanding neurodivergence (including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia/DCD and Tourette's)
- Recognising diverse presentations, including masking, internalising and externalising responses, and gender differences in presentation
- Sensory processing differences and the impact of the environment on learning
- Co-regulation strategies and emotional support approaches
- Communication differences and adaptations
- Executive function support across the curriculum
- Trauma-informed practice
- Challenging outdated assumptions, stereotypes and deficit-based thinking
- Universal Design for Learning and Quality First Teaching

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

- The senior leadership team receives advanced neurodiversity training to embed inclusive practice across school leadership
- The SEND Trustee undertakes specialist CPD in neurodiversity and SEND policy
- All Trustees receive annual neurodiversity awareness training

Specialist support

Through partnerships with local health and education services, we access occupational therapists, educational psychologists and autism and ADHD specialists to provide training and build our capacity to support neurodivergent learners.

14. Links to support services

The school works with a wide range of support services and regularly organises multi-agency meetings. We have close links with health professionals, including Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, and work closely with social care teams. Some pupils access Speech and Language Therapy, Educational Psychology, Occupational Therapy and play therapy on site.

For pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, the school works with Bassetlaw Primary Behaviour Partnership (BPBP Ltd), which is based within the academy and is a key delivery partner. The Principal is Director and Chair of BPBP Ltd.

15. Working in partnership with parents

Sparken Hill Academy believes that genuine partnership and co-production with parents is vital to the early and accurate identification of SEND, to putting the right provision in place, to children's continuing social and academic progress, and to targets being set and met effectively.

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

Parent engagement includes:

- Termly SEN Support review meetings with the phase SENCO as standard, with more frequent contact where helpful
- Parent carer forums and engagement groups (see section 15a)
- Co-production of support strategies, rather than school-led decision making
- Accessible communication in parents' preferred format
- Support from our Community Team, led by our Senior Family Worker

15a. Parent carer co-production and voice

Sparken Hill Academy recognises parent carers as experts in their children's needs and as equal partners in shaping our SEND provision. Our engagement model goes beyond consultation to genuine co-production.

Parent carer engagement structures

- Termly parent carer meetings for families of neurodivergent pupils and pupils with SEND, 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 the local Parent Carer Forum where available

Parent voice shaping school development

Parent carer voice directly influences SEND policy review, accessibility planning and environmental improvements, staff training priorities, environmental audits, and communication and home-school partnership approaches.

16. Links with other schools

We work closely with other settings to support pupils with SEND at every transition. When a child joins us, we consult parents and previous settings or teachers to build a clear understanding of their needs, and we welcome pre-admission visits.

Transition arrangements for Year 6 pupils with SEND begin with both local secondary schools in the spring term, and extended transition is arranged earlier where needed. Within school, transition days, extended transition and meetings with new teachers, parents and the child help ease any worries. Through the Sparklers EPU, the school also shares Communication and Interaction expertise with schools across Bassetlaw.

17. Links with other agencies and voluntary organisations

The SENCO team attends regular meetings that keep them informed about services and groups to which families can be signposted. These include:

- Nottinghamshire's SEND Local Offer on the Notts Help Yourself website (www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/send)
- Ask Us Nottinghamshire (SENDIASS)
- Bassetlaw Primary Behaviour Partnership (BPBP Ltd)
- The "Bright Start" therapeutic play service
- The local Parent Carer Forum

Our Community Team, led by our Senior Family Worker, supports all parents. Community Team staff are available at the beginning and end of each day, have wide knowledge of the support available, and often meet parents once needs are recognised.

18. Neurodiversity Provision Self-Assessment

Sparken Hill Academy assesses its SEND and neurodiversity provision against its own structured, six-domain self-assessment framework, which is embedded as part of our ongoing practice.

Guiding principles

- Support is needs-based, not diagnosis-dependent
- A 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 the whole staff team

Six domains for self-assessment

- 1. Leadership, culture and values:** our commitment to neurodiversity-affirming practice, visible leadership and inclusive culture (see the Mission Statement and section 10a).
- 2. Mental health:** our approaches to regulation, wellbeing and mental health support (see section 10b).
- 3. Readiness to learn:** how we support executive function, transitions, routines and preparation for learning.
- 4. Teaching and learning:** our Universal Design for Learning and Quality First Teaching approaches (see sections 8a and 9).
- 5. Environment:** our sensory-friendly environments and physical accessibility (see sections 6 and 6a).
- 6. Communication:** our parent carer co-production and partnership approaches (see sections 15 and 15a).

Self-assessment and development

We complete the self-assessment annually, drawing on staff self-assessment, parent carer surveys, pupil voice (including from neurodivergent learners), observations and audits. It informs our school development priorities and training needs, so that our support for neurodivergent learners keeps improving. We will continue to seek specialist health and education partnerships as opportunities arise.

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', which closed on 18 May 2026. As at October 2026, the government has not yet published its response. These documents set out a ten-year vision for a more inclusive mainstream school system. The reforms require legislative change and are not expected to take full effect until September 2029. The SEND Code of Practice (2015) remains in force, and Sparken Hill Academy continues to meet all existing statutory duties.

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

- **Universal:** high-quality inclusive teaching and accessible environments for all pupils, as a baseline expectation of every mainstream school.
- **Targeted:** additional support in mainstream settings (such as small-group provision, speech and language input and 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, with Education, Health and Care Plans reserved for children with the most complex needs, supported by new Specialist Provision Packages.

The school welcomes the direction of travel and notes the following developments, which this policy will be updated to reflect as they are confirmed:

- **Inclusive Mainstream Fund:** £1.6 billion over three years from 2026-27, paid directly to mainstream schools to support inclusive practice.
- **Experts at Hand:** a £1.8 billion service bringing educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and other specialists directly into mainstream schools.
- **Digital Individual Support Plans (ISPs):** mainstream schools will be required to create a digital ISP for every child with identified SEND.
- **Inclusion Strategy:** schools will be required to publish an annual Inclusion Strategy. Sparken Hill Academy has already published its Inclusion Strategy 2026-27.
- **National Inclusion Standards:** evidence-based standards for universal and targeted support in every mainstream setting, to be developed by 2028.

Our existing approaches to Universal Design for Learning, our neurodiversity self-assessment framework, our Sparklers EPU and our parent carer co-production position the school well to meet these requirements. We will review this policy again once the government publishes its response to the consultation.

Policy approval

This policy will be reviewed annually. Each review will include assessment against our Neurodiversity Provision Self-Assessment and incorporate parent carer feedback.

Signed: _____ **Mr R.Lilley (Principal)**

Date: _____

Signed: _____ **[Name] (On behalf of the SENCO team)**

Date: _____

Signed: _____ **Mrs S Sparks (SEND Trustee)**

Date: _____