

FOOTSTEPS TRUST SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) POLICY AND ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

1. Policy Statement

Footsteps Trust is committed to providing an inclusive, ambitious and supportive learning environment in which all students, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), can achieve their full potential.

As an Alternative Provision, we recognise that many students present with a combination of:

- Special Educational Needs.
- Disabilities.
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.
- Communication and interaction difficulties.
- Trauma and adverse childhood experiences.
- Attendance and engagement challenges.

We are committed to removing barriers to learning, promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that all students are able to participate fully in education, enrichment activities and wider school life.

2. Legislative Framework

This policy has been developed with regard to:

- Children and Families Act 2014.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- Independent School Standards Regulations.
- Alternative Provision Statutory Guidance.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3. Definition of SEND

A child or young person has SEND if they have:

A learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A child has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- Have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age; or
- Have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities generally provided for others of the same age.

4. Definition of Disability

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered disabled if they have:

"A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

The Academy recognises its duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students and to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

5. SEND Vision

At Footsteps Trust we believe that:

- Every child matters.
- Every child can learn.
- Every child deserves access to a high-quality education.
- Inclusion benefits all members of the school community.
- Diversity should be celebrated.
- Students should be prepared for adulthood and future success.

We aim to create a culture where difference is understood, respected and valued.

6. Aims

The Academy aims to:

- Identify SEND needs as early as possible.
- Ensure students achieve positive educational outcomes.
- Remove barriers to learning and participation.
- Provide appropriate support and interventions.
- Promote independence and resilience.

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- Support preparation for adulthood.
- Work in partnership with parents, carers and professionals.
- Ensure safeguarding and SEND work together effectively.

7. Categories of SEND

In line with the SEND Code of Practice, student needs may fall within four broad areas:

Communication and Interaction

Including:

- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).
- Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC).

Cognition and Learning

Including:

- Specific Learning Difficulties.
- Dyslexia.
- Dyspraxia.
- Moderate Learning Difficulties.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

Including:

- Attachment difficulties.
- Anxiety.
- Depression.
- Trauma-related difficulties.
- Behaviour linked to underlying needs.

Sensory and/or Physical Needs

Including:

- Hearing impairment.
- Visual impairment.
- Physical disabilities.
- Medical needs affecting learning.

8. Admission Arrangements

Footsteps Trust welcomes applications from students with SEND.

Admission decisions will:

- Be non-discriminatory.
- Consider the student's needs.
- Consider available provision and support.
- Include appropriate consultation with parents, carers and professionals.

Reasonable adjustments will be made wherever possible to support access to education.

9. Identification of SEND

The Academy will identify SEND through:

- Previous school information.
- SEND records.
- EHCP documentation.
- Baseline assessment.
- Teacher observations.
- Student voice.
- Parent/carers concerns.
- Professional reports.
- Attendance and progress data.

Identification of SEND is an ongoing process.

Staff will remain alert to students whose difficulties may emerge over time.

10. Graduated Approach

Footsteps follows the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycle.

Assess

Needs identified through assessment and evidence gathering.

Plan

Appropriate support strategies agreed.

Do

Support and interventions implemented.

Review

Impact evaluated and next steps identified.

This cycle is repeated to ensure support remains responsive and effective.

11. Individual Support

Support may include:

- Adaptive teaching.
- Scaffolded learning.
- Small group interventions.
- One-to-one mentoring.
- Emotional support.
- Speech and language strategies.
- Assistive technology.
- Alternative methods of recording work.
- Sensory support.
- Exam access arrangements.

Provision will be tailored to individual need.

12. Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

The Academy will:

- Implement EHCP provision.
- Monitor progress towards outcomes.
- Participate in annual reviews.
- Work collaboratively with Local Authorities and professionals.
- Ensure staff understand EHCP requirements.

All staff are responsible for contributing to EHCP outcomes.

13. SEND and Safeguarding

Footsteps recognises that students with SEND can be at increased risk of:

- Bullying.
- Exploitation.
- Abuse.
- Isolation.
- Mental health difficulties.

In accordance with KCSIE 2026:

- Safeguarding systems will be accessible to SEND students.
- Staff will recognise barriers to communication.
- Appropriate adjustments will be made when responding to concerns.
- SEND and safeguarding staff will work closely together.

Students' SEND needs should never be used to explain away signs of abuse or neglect.

14. Attendance

The Academy recognises that attendance difficulties may be linked to:

- Anxiety.
- SEMH needs.
- SEND-related barriers.
- Medical conditions.

Attendance concerns will be explored with sensitivity and appropriate support. Students will not be disadvantaged because of diagnosed needs.

15. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Footsteps recognises the close link between SEND and mental health.

The Academy will:

- Promote emotional wellbeing.
- Provide pastoral support.
- Access external services where appropriate.
- Support emotional regulation.
- Develop resilience and independence.

Mental health concerns will be managed through both SEND and safeguarding procedures where appropriate.

16. Working with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are key partners.

The Academy will:

- Communicate regularly.
- Involve families in decision making.
- Seek views and feedback.

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- Share progress information.
- Promote collaborative working.

Parents and carers will be encouraged to contribute to support planning and reviews.

17. Student Voice

Students will be encouraged to:

- Share views.
- Participate in reviews.
- Contribute to support planning.
- Discuss aspirations and goals.

Students should feel listened to and involved in decisions affecting them.

18. Working with External Agencies

The Academy may work with:

- Educational Psychologists.
- Speech and Language Therapists.
- CAMHS.
- Occupational Therapists.
- Local Authority SEND Teams.
- Social Care.
- Health professionals.
- Alternative Provision commissioners.

Multi-agency working is central to effective support.

19. Staff Training

The Academy will ensure staff receive training relating to:

- SEND.
- Autism.
- SEMH.
- Trauma-informed practice.
- Mental health.
- Safeguarding.
- Adaptive teaching.
- Reasonable adjustments.

SEND-related training will be reviewed annually.

20. Accessibility Plan

The Academy will continue to improve access in three key areas.

A. Access to the Curriculum

Objectives:

- Ensure curriculum access for all learners.
- Improve adaptive teaching strategies.
- Increase use of assistive technology.
- Develop staff expertise regarding SEND.

Success Measures:

- Improved student engagement.
- Improved progress outcomes.
- Positive student feedback.

B. Access to the Physical Environment

Objectives:

- Review environmental accessibility annually.
- Remove barriers where reasonably practicable.
- Improve signage and navigation.
- Ensure health and safety arrangements support accessibility.

Areas to consider include:

- Entrances and exits.
- Pathways.
- Toilets.
- Lighting.
- Furniture.
- Sensory environments.

C. Access to Information

Objectives:

- Provide information in accessible formats.
- Use alternative communication methods.
- Make learning materials adaptable.

Examples:

- Large print.
- Digital formats.

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- Audio resources.
- Visual supports.
- Assistive technology.

21. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Academy will monitor:

- Progress and attainment.
- Attendance.
- Behaviour.
- Exclusions and suspensions.
- Student voice.
- Parent feedback.
- Intervention impact.
- SEND provision quality.

Reviews will inform future planning and improvement.