

Part of the Branches Education Group



SEND POLICY



Approved By	Rebecca Warhurst	Head Teacher	March 2026
Amendments Made			
Linked Policies			
Signed	<i>R Warhurst</i>	Head Teacher	March 2026
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CONTENTS

1.0	BACKGROUND	3
1.1	Aims	3
1.2	References	3
2.0	OUR PROVISION FOR SEND	3
2.1	Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)	4
2.2	Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	4
2.3	Autism	4
2.4	Moderate Learning Disability (MLD)	5
2.5	Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs, including Attachment and Trauma	5
3.0	OUR COMMITMENT	5
3.1	Branches Education Group	5
3.2	The Willows School	6
3.3	Our Approach to Learning	6
4.0	REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING	7

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Willows School is passionate about providing high quality education which will meet the needs and interests of every pupil. We understand the incredible value of education and the role schools play in influencing pupils' aspirations and ultimately, their life chances.

All our pupils have special education needs and/ or disabilities (SEND). The majority will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Many pupils have additional needs and a range of difficulties, some undiagnosed, which we try to be aware of and will review and adapt their provision, as their presentation and needs change over time.

This policy has been written in line with DfE requirements. Our school will assess the needs of all pupils on admission and regularly beyond, to ensure that the resources and support for individual needs are regularly reviewed against EHCPs and remain appropriate to support their progress and overall outcomes.

1.1 Aims

Our aims are to support all pupils to:

- develop personally, socially, emotionally, and academically,
- make good progress and achieve their best,
- leave school with a range of qualifications and skills, supporting them to succeed in life.

1.2 References

This policy has been written in response to:

- the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, and the following legislation:
- Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, *which sets out a school's responsibilities for pupils with SEN and disabilities,*
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, *which sets out a school's responsibilities for education, health and care plans (EHCPs), SEN co-ordinators (SENCOs),*
- Autism Act 2009 - http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/15/pdfs/ukpga_20090015_en.pdf
- Care for Children and Young People who may have Autism, (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)), NICE clinical guidelines 128, (2011).
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg170/chapter/Introduction>

2.0 OUR PROVISION FOR SEND

The Willows School provides education for pupils who have complex needs and difficulties. These include:

- Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), including Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN),
- Autism,
- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD),
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), including attachment and trauma.

Our schools have specialist resources and high pupil: staff ratios. Education is delivered by a highly experienced staff team who can identify and access any additional support pupils might need, as well as that set out in the EHCP.

2.1 Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

This term refers to a difference or difficulty with a specific aspect of learning. Some of the most common diagnoses, include dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A pupil might have one or more of these difficulties and each might be on a spectrum ranging between mild and severe.

We recognise that everyone of us has different abilities to think, learn, remember and apply/ or use in practice. When someone has difficulties or weaknesses in just one or two areas compared to average or good cognitive skills, they have what is called a Specific Learning Difficulty for example, struggling to hear word sounds and form letters.

2.2 Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Some will find it difficult to listen, understand and communicate with others and may need support to develop the skills involved. SLCN is the umbrella term most used to describe these difficulties. Pupils with SLCN might have difficulty with only one area, either speech, language or communication skill, or with more. They might have difficulties with listening and understanding or with talking, or both. Every child has a unique combination of strengths. This means that every child with SLCN is different.

2.3 Autism

Autism is commonly understood and described as a pervasive neuro-divergence that affects the way a person communicates and relates to people around them. Individuals with a diagnosis of autism present a range of characteristics, with no two individuals presenting identically.

To differing extents, autistic individuals share differences affecting their ability to:

- understand and use non-verbal and verbal communication, e.g. not fully understanding the meaning of facial expressions, tone of voice or gestures,
- understand social behaviour which affects their ability to socialise and interact with others,
- think and behave in a flexible way, sometimes seen as restricted, repetitive or obsessional behaviours and activities,
- understand concepts,
- cope with or manage unexpected change, e.g. with routine.

Some autistic individuals might have a range of sensory needs, which can become intolerable or difficult to manage without support mechanisms. These can be related to enhanced or reduced perception of sounds, including volume and pitch, smell, taste, sight, or touch. Sensory needs may impact on responses, behaviour and integration. Pupils might also have planning and coordination difficulties and/ or unusual sleep patterns. They might display untypical behavioural presentations, e.g. repetitive movement or self-stimulatory behaviours (stimming), and/ or have preferences around clothing, fabric, and eating food of certain textures.

Differing sensory needs can cause significant anxiety, with individuals trying to make sense of and cope with the world around them. This can impact on their reactions and behaviour. Autistic young people, especially

females, may work hard to mask their challenges, seemingly presenting as neuro-typical in their behaviour. They will seem to be effective in 'fitting in' and be more adept at diverting attention away from themselves, to avoid interaction with others. This can lead to severe exhaustion and low self-esteem, increasing the challenges when individuals are at home, away from the school environment. This can often lead to any challenges being unnoticed, understated or not fully understood.

2.4 Moderate Learning Disability (MLD)

Pupils who make progress and achieve below the expected levels for their age, in most subjects across the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions can be described as having with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). Compared to peers, they will have greater difficulty with acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They might have speech and language delay, poor concentration, low self-esteem, and under-developed social skills.

2.5 Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs, including Attachment and Trauma

Social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) describes needs and difficulties relating to regulating emotions, social interaction, and mental health problems. Pupils might need specialist, additional support to interact with others successfully, as they might find difficulty with making and maintaining positive relationships. This could be due to adverse childhood experiences. Pupils might become withdrawn or isolated, or they might display behaviours which are described as challenging, disruptive, aggressive, or socially inappropriate.

Some pupils have Attachment Disorder, a condition shown in children who are unable to form secure attachments to those providing care. This might be due to childhood experiences of inconsistent and unpredictable care. This might present itself through inconsistent emotional responsiveness towards caregivers, and through emotions, including fear and sadness. Pupils with Attachment Disorder might not respond positively or consistently to positive recognition, including receiving verbal praise or rewards. They might have difficulty with forming and maintaining healthy relationships with others, sometimes appearing to deliberate 'break down' relationships that were once positive.

3.0 OUR COMMITMENT

3.1 Branches Education Group

Branches Education Group will support the Head Teacher and school to:

- ensure equality of opportunity for every pupil,
- provide a caring, respectful, and nurturing environment where everyone can feel safe and able to learn,
- listen to pupils' views and respond in a way that reassures them they are being heard,
- engender dignity, self-respect, and independence,
- have high aspirations, supporting pupils to maximise their own potential,
- identify and provide the resources needed for pupils to succeed,
- provide a suitable and interesting curriculum, based on the National Curriculum, which will be tailored to meet the individual needs of pupils, as appropriate.

- collaborate with parents, carers, and a range of professionals to ensure the wider needs of pupils can be met,
- monitor and report on pupil progress and attainment, ensuring they can achieve well, and that parents, carers and relevant professionals have regular reports,
- assess pupils' needs after admission to the school, usually by 12 weeks, and regularly thereafter,
- monitor and refine resources and provision, ensuring it continues to meet needs, and will help the pupil to meet their objectives as set out in their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and other assessment outcomes,
- identify at least one staff member to be suitably qualified to undertake SENCO responsibilities, ensuring we follow statutory processes and provide guidance and support for staff,
- provide staff with a clear understanding of pupils' needs and difficulties, as they join our school and regularly thereafter. This might mean additional specialist training as needed to meet needs or secure *the* very best practice.

3.2 The Willows School

The Head Teacher will support the staff team to:

- know children and their needs well, including as set out in their EHCP and through information provided by parents/ carers and a range of professionals, prior to joining our school,
- support pupils to have a smooth, personalised transition into our school,
- ensure all pupils feel safe and can thrive in our school,
- carry out a range of baseline assessments during the first 12-week period,
- ensure pupils have access to clinical and/ or therapeutic input as set out in the EHCP,
- support pupils to understand and embrace difference, being aware of equality and diversity,
- provide an appropriate curriculum, resources, and support to meet individual needs,
- use a range of assistive or information and communications technologies as appropriate to pupil needs,
- assess and record pupil progress, attainment, and overall achievement in school, reporting to parents and commissioners regularly,
- listen to pupils and include them in planning and decision making about their provision,
- consult and work effectively with parents, carers, and a range of professionals to ensure pupil needs are met,
- agree regular short-term objectives, helping pupils to achieve their longer-term objectives, as set out in their EHCP,
- identify and implement appropriate provision, activities, and curriculum to support pupils' individual needs,

3.3 Our Approach to Learning

We know that pupils are all different. We know that pupils learn best when their individual needs are met. To ensure that pupils can learn at a good pace, appropriate to their needs, we will:

- personalise pupil timetables to meet needs and interests,
- employ staff who are suitably skilled, qualified, and passionate about securing the best for pupils,
- provide an environment which is suitable for individual needs and is cared for by all,

- support pupils with developing key skills, including communication, social, life skills and development of resilience,
- build a careful balance of routine and opportunity for enhanced learning within the community, encouraging pupils to become 'good citizens' and be prepared for life beyond school,
- develop a broad offer to deliver physical education, work related learning and experience, learning about culture and history within our local community,
- build in opportunities for social activities and development during break and lunchtime,
- develop autism friendly approaches and use visual timetables, social script/ story in ways which will support pupils' needs.

4.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- SEN Code of Practice -25 years, DfE, 2014
- SEND Review: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time, DfE, 2022 updated 2023
- Non-association independent school inspection handbook, Ofsted 2019, updated 2022
- SEND: Old Issues, New Issues, Ofsted, 2021
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, 2018
- Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2015 updated 2023
- Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions, DfE 2014
- Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: Green Paper, Secretary of State for Education, 2017
- The SEND Gatsby Benchmark Toolkit - Practical information and guidance ..for Careers Children and Families Act 2014
- NICE: Autism - quality standard 51, 2014
- A good education for all, Ofsted, 2012
- Lamb Inquiry review of SEN 2009
- Education Act 2011
- Aiming High for Disabled Children, 2007
- Excellence for all children' DfEE, 1997
- BILD Learning Disabilities Core Skills Education and Training Framework
- SEND Support Services – Blackburn and Darwen Council, [Blackburn Local Offer | SEND \(Special Educational Needs and Disability\) Support Service \(bwd-localoffer.org.uk\)](https://www.blackburnlocaloffer.org.uk/)
- Autism Education Trust Resources at: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>
- Autism Ed. Trust Progression Framework <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/shop/pf-shop/>
- Autism: a very short introduction, Uta Frith, 2008
- Positive behaviour strategies to support children and young people with ASC, Martin Hanbury
- The reason I jump, Naoki Higashida, 2015