Inclusion Policy

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Approved by the Board of Trustees [insert approval date]

Contents

Statement of intent

1 Legal framework

2 Scope and meaning of inclusion

3 Principles

4 Roles and responsibilities

5 Identification and the graduated approach

6 Inclusive curriculum teaching and assessment

7 SEND disability medical needs and accessibility

8 Early Years Foundation Stage

9 Safeguarding wellbeing and mental health

10 Attendance behaviour suspension and exclusion

11 Equality discrimination and bullying

12 Pupil and parent participation

13 Transitions alternative provision and inclusion bases

14 Information monitoring and review

Statement of intent

Tyne and Wear Learning Trust is committed to providing an inclusive, safe and ambitious education for every child across its primary schools and early years settings. Inclusion means identifying and removing barriers so that pupils can belong, participate, learn and achieve alongside their peers wherever this is appropriate to their needs.

We have high expectations for all pupils. Difference or disadvantage must not result in a less ambitious curriculum. Schools will combine high-quality teaching with timely, evidence-informed support, reasonable adjustments and effective partnership with children, parents, carers and external agencies.

The Trust recognises that barriers may arise from special educational needs or disability, health, communication, language, social or emotional needs, family circumstances, disadvantage, attendance, discrimination or other vulnerability. Staff will consider the whole child and avoid assuming that a single label explains a pupil's presentation or needs.

Safeguarding is central to inclusion. Children with SEND, health conditions, communication needs or reduced attendance may face additional safeguarding risks. Staff will remain professionally curious, listen to children and act promptly where a child may need early help or protection.

In this policy, "the school" includes every academy and EYFS provision operated by the Trust. This policy should be read with each school's SEND information report and accessibility plan.

1 Legal framework

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and the duty to make reasonable adjustments
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Education Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014
- SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 years
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Working together to improve school attendance 2026
- Behaviour in schools and the statutory suspension and permanent exclusion guidance effective from 26 July 2026
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions
- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers from September 2026
- DfE guidance on inclusion bases in schools 2026.

Related policies and information

This policy operates alongside the following Trust and school documents:

- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
- Accessibility Plan
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- First Aid and Allergy Safety Policy
- Early Years Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Complaints Policy and Data Protection Policy

2 Scope and meaning of inclusion

Inclusion is the ongoing process of anticipating, identifying and removing barriers to presence, participation, learning, wellbeing and achievement. It is not a separate intervention or a place. Every member of staff shares responsibility for inclusive practice.

This policy applies to all pupils. Particular attention will be given to children who may experience overlapping barriers, including:

- pupils with SEND, disabilities, medical conditions or sensory and communication needs
- children in care, previously looked-after children, children with a social worker and children in kinship care
- pupils who are disadvantaged, young carers, homeless or living in temporary accommodation
- pupils who speak English as an additional language, including new arrivals and refugees
- pupils experiencing poor mental health, emotionally based barriers to attendance, trauma or bereavement
- pupils at risk of suspension, permanent exclusion, exploitation, bullying or discriminatory harm
- children whose attendance is declining or who are missing education
- pupils with protected characteristics and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

3 Principles

- Every child is entitled to dignity, safety, belonging and a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum.
- High-quality teaching is the starting point for meeting need; additional provision supplements rather than replaces it.
- Children's needs will be identified early, but support will not be delayed while a diagnosis or formal assessment is awaited.
- Schools will make reasonable adjustments and use their best endeavours to secure special educational provision.
- Decisions will be based on evidence, professional judgement and the views of the pupil and family, not stereotypes or deficit assumptions.
- Provision will be reviewed for impact. Support that is not improving access, participation or outcomes will be adapted.
- Staff will protect confidentiality while sharing information on a need-to-know basis to keep children safe and meet their needs.

4 Roles and responsibilities

Trust Board

- Ensures compliance with equality, SEND, safeguarding, attendance and inclusion duties and maintains strategic oversight.
- Approves Trust-wide policy and receives assurance about implementation, outcomes and use of resources.
- Ensures the Trust and its schools publish required equality, SEND and accessibility information.

Chief Executive Officer and executive leaders

- Set Trust-wide expectations, allocate resources and secure appropriate professional development.
- Use school improvement, safeguarding and governance systems to identify inconsistency or inequity and require action.
- Promote collaboration between schools and with local authorities, health, social care and other partners.

Local Governing Bodies

- Monitor implementation and pupil outcomes at school level.
- Challenge leaders about barriers, disproportionality, attendance, exclusions and the impact of provision.

Headteachers and senior leaders

- Lead a culture of belonging, high expectations and lawful reasonable adjustment.
- Ensure responsibilities are clear, staff are trained and adequate resources are available.
- Oversee curriculum access, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, medical support and partnership with families.
- Ensure decisions about part-time timetables, alternative provision, suspension and exclusion follow statutory guidance and are not used to manage unmet need.

SENCO

- Coordinates the school's SEND arrangements and the graduated approach.
- Advises colleagues, liaises with parents and professionals, and supports transition between settings.
- Maintains appropriate records and contributes to strategic planning, staff development and evaluation.
- Meets the statutory qualification requirements applicable to the role.

Designated safeguarding lead

- Ensures safeguarding risks associated with SEND, disability, health, reduced attendance and communication needs are understood.
- Coordinates early help and referrals, and ensures the child's voice is heard through an appropriate communication method.

Teachers and other staff

- Teachers remain responsible and accountable for the progress and development of pupils in their class, including where support staff or specialists are involved.
- Plan accessible teaching, make agreed adjustments, implement pupil plans and evaluate impact.
- Notice and record emerging barriers; communicate promptly with the SENCO, DSL or senior leader as appropriate.
- Challenge discrimination, prejudice-based language, bullying and low expectations.

Pupils parents and carers

Pupils will be supported to express their views and participate in decisions. Parents and carers are expected to share relevant information, work with the school and raise concerns early. The school will communicate clearly, provide interpretation or accessible information where reasonably required, and explain decisions and routes for review or complaint.

5 Identification and the graduated approach

Schools will use a graduated approach of assess, plan, do and review. Information may include classroom observation, curriculum assessment, attendance, behaviour, health and safeguarding information, pupil and parent views and advice from specialists. A pupil will not be identified as having SEND solely because attainment is lower than expected or English is an additional language.

Assess

Staff will identify the nature of the barrier, strengths, context and factors that may affect learning. Where progress remains less than expected despite appropriate teaching, the class teacher and SENCO will consider whether the pupil has SEND and whether SEN support is required.

Plan and do

The pupil, parents and relevant staff will agree intended outcomes, adjustments, provision, review arrangements and responsibilities. The class teacher retains day-to-day responsibility. Provision will be specific, achievable and proportionate.

Review

Progress and the effectiveness of support will be reviewed at agreed intervals. The school will adapt provision, seek specialist advice or consider an EHC needs assessment where evidence indicates this may be necessary. Statutory duties in an EHC plan must be delivered and annual reviews completed within required timescales.

6 Inclusive curriculum teaching and assessment

All pupils will have access to an ambitious curriculum. Adaptation should increase access without unnecessarily narrowing content or limiting future choices. Schools will:

- use clear explanations, modelling, scaffolding, checks for understanding and opportunities for guided and independent practice
- select resources, technology and communication approaches that enable access
- teach vocabulary and background knowledge explicitly where needed, including for pupils with EAL
- make assessment accessible and apply approved access arrangements without changing the construct being assessed
- plan enrichment, clubs, trips, residential visits, sport and performances so disabled pupils and pupils with additional needs can participate wherever reasonably possible
- deploy additional adults to promote learning, communication and independence rather than dependency or separation
- monitor the curriculum experience and outcomes of groups and act where patterns indicate inequity.

Curriculum withdrawal will be purposeful, time-limited and reviewed. It will not routinely remove a pupil from the same subject or from a broad and balanced curriculum.

7 SEND disability medical needs and accessibility

Reasonable adjustments and anticipatory planning

The duty to make reasonable adjustments is anticipatory for disabled pupils. Schools will consider changes to policies, routines, teaching, communication, assessment, the physical environment and auxiliary aids or services. Cost, effectiveness, practicability, available resources, health and safety and the interests of others may be relevant, but decisions will be individual and recorded.

Accessibility

Each school will maintain and publish an accessibility plan addressing curriculum access, the physical environment and accessible information. Accessibility will be considered in procurement, estates work, digital systems, communications and emergency planning.

Medical conditions and allergies

Pupils with medical conditions and allergies will be supported to participate fully and safely. Individual healthcare plans will be used where appropriate. Emergency medication must remain accessible and staff must understand relevant plans. Health needs may amount to a disability and require reasonable adjustments even where a pupil is not identified as having SEND.

Intimate care and personal assistance

Support will protect dignity, privacy and safety and will follow the Trust's safeguarding and intimate care arrangements. A child will not be excluded from education because reasonable personal care support is required.

8 Early Years Foundation Stage

Early identification and inclusive practice begin before admission. EYFS settings will gather information from parents and previous providers, observe children across the curriculum and respond promptly to emerging needs. The setting SENCO will support practitioners and partnership with relevant agencies.

- The key person and parents will be involved in assessing needs, planning support and reviewing progress.
- Communication, sensory, physical, health, allergy and dietary needs will be understood by relevant staff.
- The learning environment and routines will be adapted so children can participate in play, care and learning.
- Safeguarding and welfare requirements in the September 2026 EYFS framework will be followed, including appropriate supervision, information sharing, risk management and paediatric first-aid arrangements.
- Transitions into Reception and between settings will be planned early and information transferred securely.

9 Safeguarding wellbeing and mental health

Inclusion and safeguarding are connected but not interchangeable. Staff must not attribute indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation or deteriorating wellbeing solely to SEND, disability, behaviour or family circumstances. Concerns will be reported to the DSL without delay in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Children with SEND or health conditions can face additional barriers to recognising or reporting harm. Staff will consider communication needs, the risk of assumptions that an incident relates to a condition, and the possibility of disproportionate bullying or child-on-child abuse. A trusted adult, visual support, interpreter or specialist communication method will be used where appropriate.

Behaviour, attendance and emotional presentation may communicate unmet need, but this does not remove the need for clear boundaries or safeguarding action. Pastoral and mental-health support will be coordinated with curriculum, SEND, attendance and safeguarding work. Schools will not diagnose mental ill-health; concerns requiring clinical assessment will be referred appropriately.

10 Attendance behaviour suspension and exclusion

Attendance

Attendance is everyone's responsibility and is a key inclusion measure. Schools will analyse individual and group patterns, listen to pupils and families, identify barriers early and agree support through the attendance framework. Where absence relates to SEND, disability or ill-health, the school will consider reasonable adjustments and work with health, SEND and local authority services while maintaining high expectations for attendance.

A part-time timetable may be used only in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest necessary period, with parental agreement, a clear review and reintegration plan, safeguarding consideration and oversight in line with attendance guidance. It must not be used to manage behaviour or unmet need.

Behaviour

The behaviour curriculum and school rules apply fairly to all pupils. Equality does not always mean identical treatment. Staff will consider whether SEND, disability, trauma, communication or other vulnerability contributed to an incident; whether reasonable adjustments were in place; and what additional support or teaching is required. Adjustments do not prevent proportionate consequences where these remain appropriate.

Suspension and permanent exclusion

Suspension and permanent exclusion will be used only in accordance with statutory guidance and the Trust policy. Before deciding, the headteacher will consider the circumstances, relevant evidence, the pupil's views, possible contribution of SEND or disability, reasonable adjustments and whether unmet need may have influenced the behaviour. Permanent exclusion is a last resort and must be lawful, reasonable, fair and proportionate.

Off-rolling, unlawful exclusion, repeatedly sending a pupil home without recording a suspension, or using absence to manage behaviour is prohibited. Reintegration following suspension will be planned and supportive.

11 Equality discrimination and bullying

The Trust will eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Schools will prevent and respond to bullying, harassment, victimisation, sexual harassment and prejudice-related incidents. Protected characteristics will not be treated as an exhaustive list of pupils who may require support.

Incidents will be recorded, investigated and responded to under the relevant policy. Leaders will review patterns, including disproportionality in sanctions, attendance, SEND identification, access to activities and outcomes, and will take corrective action.

12 Pupil and parent participation

Pupils have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Their views will be sought in a way that is accessible and proportionate to age, understanding and communication needs. Staff will explain what has been decided and why.

Parents and carers are essential partners. Schools will provide clear information, avoid unnecessary jargon, make reasonable communication adjustments and offer interpretation or translation where appropriate. Meetings will focus on strengths, barriers, intended outcomes and the impact of support.

Concerns should initially be raised with the class teacher, SENCO or headteacher as appropriate. Parents may use the Trust Complaints Policy where a concern is unresolved. Complaints concerning an EHC assessment or plan may follow separate statutory routes, which the school will explain.

13 Transitions alternative provision and inclusion bases

Transitions

Transition planning will begin early for children with additional needs. Information will be transferred securely and promptly, and the pupil and family will be involved. Planning may include visits, visual information, joint meetings, staff training, environmental adjustments and coordination of health or safeguarding plans.

Alternative provision

Where alternative provision is used, the school remains responsible for safeguarding, welfare, attendance monitoring, curriculum entitlement and reviewing whether the placement is meeting its purpose. Provision will be suitable, safe and quality-assured. It will not be used as an informal exclusion or to remove a pupil from the school roll unlawfully.

Inclusion bases

Where a school operates or develops an inclusion base, it will follow the DfE 2026 guidance. The base will have a clear purpose, admission and exit criteria, skilled leadership, safe staffing and governance oversight. Pupils will remain members of the wider school community, access ambitious teaching and have planned opportunities to learn and participate with peers. Placements will be time-limited or reviewed regularly against agreed outcomes and reintegration plans.

14 Information monitoring and review

Schools will keep proportionate, accurate and secure records. Information will be shared lawfully and only with those who need it to safeguard the pupil or provide education and support. Records will reflect the pupil's voice, decisions, provision and review of impact.

School and Trust leaders will monitor evidence including:

- attainment, progress and curriculum participation
- attendance, persistent and severe absence and children missing education
- behaviour incidents, bullying, suspensions, permanent exclusions and use of part-time timetables
- SEND identification, EHC plan provision, intervention impact and accessibility actions
- safeguarding and wellbeing themes, while protecting confidentiality
- participation in enrichment, trips, leadership and wider opportunities
- pupil and parent feedback, complaints and equality objectives.

Data will be considered by relevant characteristics and vulnerability groups where numbers allow meaningful and confidential analysis. Leaders will investigate unexplained disparities rather than drawing conclusions from data alone.

The Trust Board will review this policy at least annually and sooner following significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance or Trust arrangements. Schools will review implementation through governance, school improvement, safeguarding and SEND assurance processes.