

Special Educational Needs (SEND) policy (January 2026)

This policy is concerned with how Spring School provides for children with special educational needs.

This policy is to be implemented by:

- all staff

This policy is addressed to all:

- teaching staff
- pupils
- governors

This policy is governed by the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust and utilised by Spring School.

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1. Objectives of the provisions

1.1 This policy provides a framework for the identification of and provision for children with special educational needs detailing how the needs of the most complex pupils within our school population will be met in order for them to make as much progress in the curriculum as possible. Although all the pupils at Spring School will have additional and special educational needs, there will be a proportion who for the following reasons find it extremely difficult to make the progress they are capable of. The reasons include:

- an exceptionally low starting point
- exceptional difficulty in meeting the behavioural expectations of the school
- exceptional difficulty in progressing in one or more curriculum area or one or more aspect of the curriculum – for example, literacy, application of numeracy or communication

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- exceptional barriers to social development which limits the benefit the pupil can gain from mainstream links and/or enrichments activities.

1.2 This policy is written for the benefit of all members of the school community to ensure that the potential of every child is maximised, irrespective of ability, disability, race, gender and social origin and to enable equality of access to the curriculum in an environment where every student is valued and respected. Spring School is a special free school and we therefore welcome pupils with special educational needs ensuring that all pupils have an equal opportunity to engage in the curriculum.

1.3 We aim to create a sense of community and belonging, and to offer new opportunities to learners who may have experienced previous difficulties.

1.4 We recognise that we will need to consider the individual needs of pupils when planning our curriculum. We will provide a curriculum which is accessible to the individual needs of our pupils and maximises the opportunity to achieve positive outcomes which may also include opportunities to integrate pupils into mainstream learning.

1.5 All pupils attending Spring School will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). In particular pupils will have a diagnosis of autism and therefore will experience difficulties with language, communication and interaction. Pupils may have other needs such as behavioral and/or medical needs. As a special free school every aspect of our provision is designed to meet the special educational needs of our pupils. Our aims and purposes summarise the principles underpinning everything that we do.

1.6 Our objectives are:

- to provide a relevant, broad and balanced education for every individual child
- to create a culture of achievement by stimulating a desire to learn, raising aspirations, opening up a wide range of opportunities and working towards external accreditation for all our pupils
- to promote health, well-being, happiness, enjoyment, and independence in a stimulating yet safe, secure and caring environment
- to demonstrate that meeting the needs of pupils' learning and/or behaviour is integral to all aspects of the school curriculum
- to promote self-worth and enthusiasm by encouraging independent learning at all age levels
- to give every student the entitlement to a sense of achievement
- to value and respect individuals, recognising their strengths, encouraging them to develop their interests and abilities, and helping them show positive attitudes towards others
- to be proactive in developing, using and promoting consistent, specific approaches, with a focus on social interaction and communication, language and literacy and the reduction of anxiety and unnecessary stress
- to invest in the long-term quality of life of our pupils, by preparing them for an independent and purposeful role in society as adults, through the acquisition of essential language, literacy, life and employability skills and by developing socially acceptable behaviour, confidence and self-esteem
- to prepare our pupils for the challenges and opportunities of a complex and technologically advanced society through creative, innovative and motivating approaches to teaching and learning.

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1.7 We are committed to self-evaluation and professional growth and are striving to be a learning organisation changing how we do things where feedback or evaluation indicates that this will lead to improvement. We believe in cooperation and partnership with families, as well as with others in the local community and further afield, who share our commitment to improving the lives of autistic children and young people.

2. SEN for which provision is made

2.1 Spring School specialises in the education of autistic children and young people. Recognising that commitment is given to promoting inclusion in mainstream as a preferred option, there is a core group of pupils for whom mainstream placements may not be suitable and whose needs are best met by spending all or most of the school day in a setting which takes account of the impact of autism on the individual and has the specialist skills to provide an adapted curriculum, communicative and learning environment.

2.2 All pupils will have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for autism with associated language, communication and interaction difficulties.

3. Roles & responsibilities

3.1 Spring School has a statutory duty to ensure that the necessary provision is made for pupils with SEN and to ensure that teachers in the school are aware of the importance of identifying and providing for those pupils. The role of the governing body is to oversee the school's provision and report annually on SEN policy and practice.

3.2 The governing body establishes the appropriate staffing and funding for all pupils with special needs.

3.3 The Head of School has responsibility for the day to day management of all aspects of the school's work including provision for children with SEN. The Head of School shares responsibility with the governing body for developing and implementing the policy for SEN. The Head of School works closely with the class teachers and keeps the governing body informed of this area of the school's development, through the termly report to governors.

3.4 In particular the Head of School will report on the proportion of our pupil group for whom making good progress in their learning is made more challenging by:

- an exceptionally low starting point
- exceptional difficulty in meeting the behavioural expectations of the school
- exceptional difficulty in progressing in one or more curriculum area or one or more aspect of the curriculum e.g. literacy, application of numeracy or communication
- exceptional barriers to social development which limits the benefit the pupil can gain from mainstream links and/or enrichments activities.

The role of the special educational needs coordinator (SENDCO) is as follows. In a SEND school these roles are distributed amongst a range of colleagues including, but not limited to the class group tutor, specialist teachers, Assistant Head for Wellbeing and Welfare and Deputy Head Teacher.

3.5 The SENDCO is the principal agency through whom the governors discharge their duties. The SENDCO oversees the implementation and day to day operation of the

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school's SEND policy having responsibility for monitoring the progress of all pupils with learning difficulties and emotional/behavioural needs.

3.6 In particular the SENDCO's responsibilities include:

- coordinating the provision for SEN, assisting with the identification and assessment of pupils with additional SEN
- advising and supporting class teachers
- working with parents – including termly communication about goals and targets
- ensuring that suitable resources are provided
- ensuring that individual short-term targets are drawn up and monitoring their quality and impact
- assisting with the implementation of the short term targets and their reviews
- ensuring that the records of SEN pupils are updated and reviewed
- contributing to in-service training
- undertaking quality assurance of all aspects of SEN provision.

4. Facilities available, including disability access

4.1 Pupils at Spring School Special School will be offered a range of specialist facilities including:

- small classes with a high adult-pupil ratio
- teachers with specialist additional qualifications
- a team of skilled and committed support staff who have undertaken specialist training
- school organisation and approaches to teaching and learning designed to take account of the particular characteristics of pupils with autism and associated language, communication and interaction difficulties, reflecting a range of evidence based approaches
- access to a curriculum appropriate to their ages, needs and abilities, including for some pupils a modified National Curriculum and a particular emphasis on social interaction and communication skills
- a physically secure environment with good curriculum related facilities and other specialist facilities
- excellent multi-agency links and close partnership working with an autism support service.

4.2 All our basic teaching, social and administration areas will be fully accessible and compatible with all relevant equalities legislation.

4.3 We aim to create a calm, supportive, structured environment. We will make every effort to meet the medical needs of pupils – for example through implementing a clear and practical policy on the administration of medication.

5. Allocation of resources

5.1 We are committed to the recruitment and professional development of staff in appropriate numbers to meet the needs of all pupils in the light of our stated objectives. We also aim to provide high levels of materials and equipment to support effective teaching and learning, and to develop the school's premises and facilities to provide a high quality autism-specific environment. Decisions about the allocation of resources to pupils will be guided by the provision specified for individual need in their EHCP.

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5.2 Where new challenges arise that impact on a pupil's ability to make good progress in their learning an emergency meeting will be held to determine a clear pathway of success. Input from the pupil's parents, class teacher, relevant specialists and senior leaders and the local authority will be required to ensure that the right resources are made available.

5.3 Action to meet pupils' SEN aims to promote independent learning and falls within four broad strands:

- assessment, planning and review
- grouping for teaching purposes
- additional human resources
- curriculum and teaching methods.

5.4 The school allocates appropriate resources to all classes and departments annually based on urgency of need, school improvement plan priorities, and availability of funds.

5.5 Each year our School Improvement Plan will focus on agreed improvements in a range of areas. Within each area a number of targets will be addressed and funding from available sources will be allocated for these developments.

5.6 Annual review (or more frequently as required) of the deployment of staff and the use of the building is essential in order to ensure that we utilise resources effectively to meet pupil needs. We are keen to secure best value for all expenditure and we carefully monitor and evaluate the impact of all our work.

6. Identification & review of pupil needs

6.1 The individual special educational needs of pupils are outlined in their EHCPs and these EHCPs include clear educational objectives. The school will use these objectives in order to plan appropriate educational provision for each pupil.

6.2 All EHCPs are reviewed annually at the Annual Review Meeting. We are committed to providing sufficient time for each meeting so that parents, staff and others involved in the pupil's education and care can discuss progress and plan carefully for the future. The Deputy Headteacher and the class teacher, are present at each review meeting. We also encourage the involvement of pupils in their own reviews. Additional professionals may be invited as specified in the EHCP as required.

6.3 The calendar for the annual review of pupils' EHCP is drawn up at the start of each academic year by the leadership team. The calendar is circulated to all of the relevant agencies so that they can make plans for their involvement wherever appropriate.

6.4 As part of the review process the objectives listed on the EHCP are considered and it may be recommended that they are amended, removed or added to. Key short to medium term targets relating to these longer term objectives form the basis of an Individual Support Plan (ISP) for each pupil. Progress towards targets is reviewed regularly and they are amended as appropriate through the school year.

6.5 It is important to remember that the ISP represents only a part of the planning undertaken for each pupil, and that there is careful consideration of individual needs and more detailed definition of intended learning outcomes in all areas of the curriculum.

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6.6 The assessment cycle procedures undergo regular review so that we can adapt our curriculum and use our resources efficiently to take account of group and individual needs. As part of this process we use a range of assessment strategies including teacher assessment, National Curriculum SATs, external examinations and accreditation. These assessments are used alongside other relevant information in the planning of the curriculum and in setting whole-school and cohort targets.

7. Access to the curriculum

7.1 Pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum which is relevant to their individual needs. It is the aim of Spring School that pupils will follow the National Curriculum. For some pupils it may be necessary for them to follow an adapted form of the National Curriculum. Wherever it is appropriate pupils are supported to integrate into mainstream lessons. Further information is available in individual policy documents for all subjects, setting out subject- specific aims, expectations and teaching and learning considerations.

7.2 The curriculum is planned and differentiated to meet the range of individual needs of all pupils. The curriculum is further modified on a short term planning basis to meet specific individual's SEN including a clear pathway that illustrates and demonstrates the steps a pupil takes to overcome their exceptional challenges.

7.3 Extra support to access mainstream lesson is provided by Spring School staff and through careful choice of resources to facilitate access.

8. Evaluation of provision

8.1 We are committed to effective school self-evaluation as a basis for raising standards; this is paramount if we are to achieve our SEN policy. Our provision is evaluated in several ways:

- i. external evaluation – for example, by OFSTED
- ii. monitoring of achievements in the National Curriculum and other subjects
- iii. external accreditation results
- iv. attendance and exclusions
- v. progress in terms of ISP targets
- vi. progress against success criteria, with a particular role for the governing body
- vii. regular review and evaluation of the whole school using scrutiny of work and monitoring of planning and visits by designated Trustee Governors.
- viii. review of the work of individual staff members through performance management and Professional Review (this includes regular lesson observations and quality assurance of learning documentation such as ISPs, lessons plans and records of progress)
- ix. evaluation of other coordinated approaches to school self-evaluation – for example surveys of parents, listening carefully to pupils, which together with the information detailed above, will contribute to the production of a well-founded evaluation of our strengths and areas for improvement.

9. Continual Professional Development on SEN

9.1 We are committed to supporting the continued professional development of all staff through appropriate training.

9.2 Training is provided for individual members of staff to enable them to fulfil their role. This includes specialist training related to autism and associated language, communication and

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interaction difficulties. Training is provided for needs identified through monitoring of teaching and through performance management. The School is supportive of all staff who want to advance their general educational qualifications, through a range of continual professional development opportunities.

9.3 New members of staff or those changing their role will be supported by an established induction programme.

9.4 Whole school training is provided to increase the knowledge and understanding of staff and to develop effective practice across the school, aligned to our school priorities. Training will be offered for mainstream staff in any partner school, to support the inclusion of Spring School pupils.

10. The use of external support services & agencies

10.1 Spring School liaises with outside support services whenever their expertise helps to meet the needs of pupils more effectively. The school maintains a data base of contacts and facilities, which can be called upon for advice and support. Spring School also benefits from the extensive professional networks of the Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust.

10.2 Spring School employs a range of its own specialist staff including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and behavioural specialists and will access other services through key relationships with placing local authorities.

10.3 We cooperate closely with social care colleagues who support families, arrange respite care and also help in the transition from school. We also work with local community commissioning groups in the health sector where appropriate and other community agencies who offer support and expertise to enrich our provision for pupils. High quality family support and training is made available and continues to develop in order to meet the needs of the pupils, families and professionals involved with providing services that meet the SEN of our pupils.

11. The role of parents

11.1 First and foremost, parents are a key part of the Spring School team to ensure that each pupil makes progress in their learning, has aspirational goals and is able to overcome additional challenges as they arise.

11.2 We welcome and encourage the participation of parents in Spring School and appreciate their help and support.

11.3 We believe in consulting and cooperating with parents in order to help all pupils to make optimum progress in all areas of their development. We follow an 'open door' policy which means that parents can approach the school whenever they have a concern and time will be made for them. All parents know the staff who work with their children and school staff ensure to develop and maintain open communication and rapport with the families.

11.4 We value highly the contribution made by those governors and trustees who are parents, and we are grateful for the time and commitment that they give to the school.

11.5 Opportunities will be provided for parents/carers to come and work with the teacher. 'Parent Meet' provides social opportunities and sharing of the Spring School Way.

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11.6 Where parents have difficulties in attending school meetings about their children we will make every effort to make alternative arrangements. Spring School aims to ensure 100% parental/carer attendance and contribution to all educational meetings.

11.7 There are formal opportunities for parents to meet with staff through the annual review processes and through termly progress review meetings. We will also operate home-school diaries or electronic contact systems (e.g. e-mail, text, Twitter) wherever parents find this helpful, and we are happy to use information & communication technology to keep in touch – for example sharing resources, pictures and information, through maintaining an up to date website, and distributing our newsletters electronically.

11.8 We ensure that parents are aware of other services that they can access locally that support and provide information and advice either formally as part of the SEN code of practice and the local offer or informally from local groups.

11.9 We strive to ensure that all information is provided to parents in a format that they can access and understand. We will do this by agreeing a communication charter with each of them and reviewing this annually.

12. Links with other schools & colleges

12.1 We recognise that transition is likely to be particularly challenging for autistic pupils and are committed to facilitating a smooth transition for all pupils joining or leaving the school. For pupils at Spring School detailed transition planning will take place which as a minimum is compliant with the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice.

12.2 We recognise that planning for transition needs to start early and consideration will be given to that from the moment the pupil is on roll. Learning will be planned to support transition, and in Year 9 Annual Reviews, a Transition Plan will be drawn up to prepare for their move to adulthood.

12.3 During the time the pupils are with us, we look for relevant opportunities to provide experiences in the mainstream school and, where appropriate a college environment, through a range of inclusion arrangements. These links not only strengthen our capacity to deliver a personalised curriculum; they will lead to some pupils transferring full-time into mainstream provision.

12.4 We will offer work experience placements to pupils from secondary schools and from colleges and are committed to developing effective links with employers to support this. We see this as an important link which provides valuable experience for both the pupils and for our pupils.

13. Links with agencies & services

13.1 In order to coordinate provision for a child with SEND, the school has links with a variety of outside agencies, such as:

- Speech and Language Services
- Education Welfare Office
- Occupational Therapy
- Social Services
- Educational Psychologists
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services

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13.2 We aim to develop the school as a base for interaction between agencies concerned with autism and also language and communication, and to build a centre of excellence.

13.3 The school has regular access to external support services for our pupils which supplements the contribution of our specialist team. There is regular liaison and exchange of information between the school and these services. Spring School provides support where possible to local schools who have autistic children with associated language, communication and interaction difficulties.

14. Pupils' voice

14.1 We encourage pupils to participate in their learning by:

- having involvement in target setting and identifying teaching and learning strategies that work for them
- taking account of their views in every aspect of their education and school life
- encouraging self-advocacy and independence
- participation in Pupil Council activity as the school grows.

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