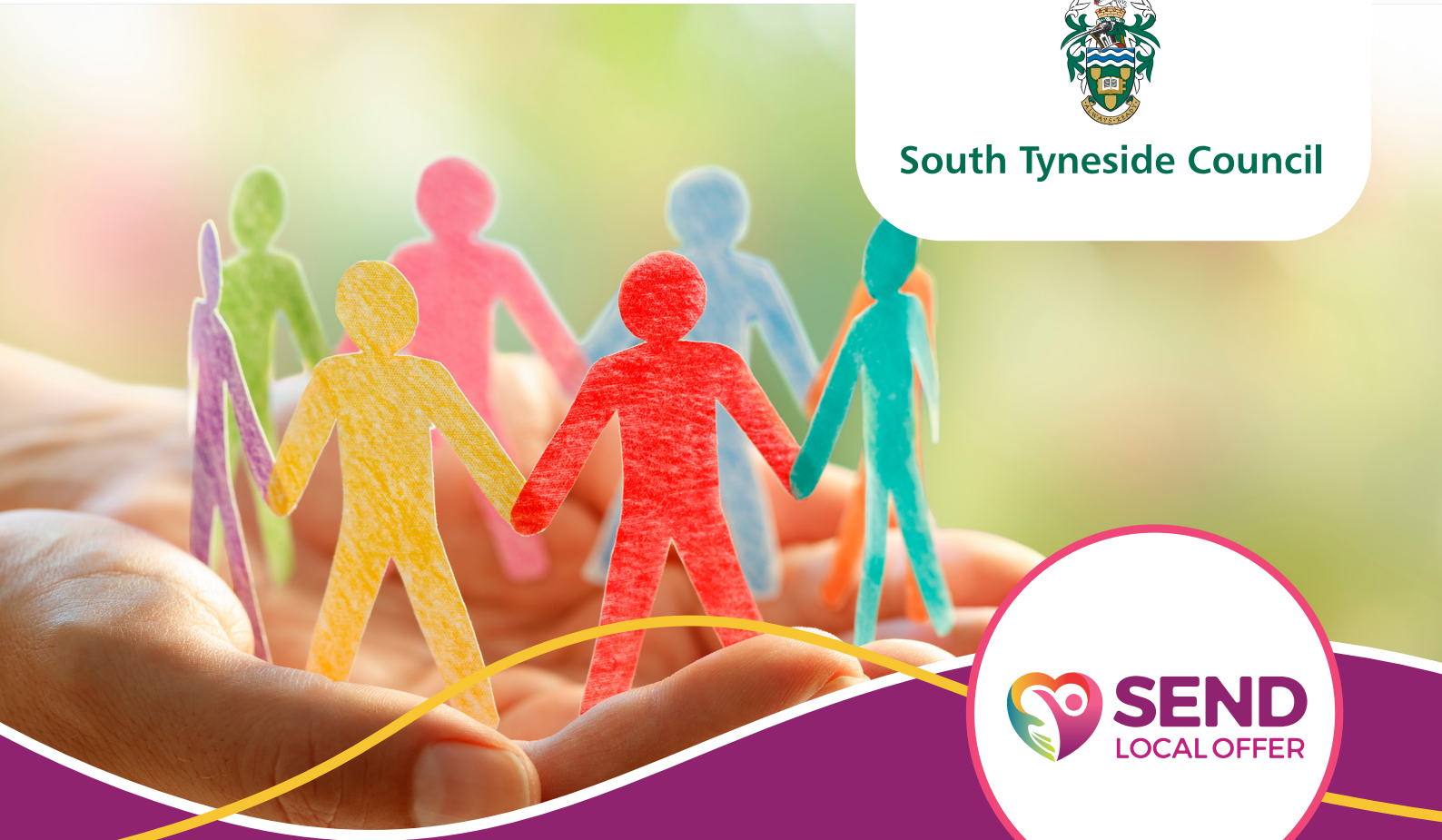




South Tyneside Council



**SEND**  
LOCAL OFFER

# **SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework**

## **July 2026**

**For Education Professionals in South Tyneside**

A young girl with blonde hair, smiling and looking up, holding a red pencil over a piece of paper. The background is blurred, showing an indoor setting. A decorative wavy line in teal and pink runs along the right edge of the image.

**South Tyneside Council  
is committed to supporting  
early identification, inclusive  
practice and timely  
intervention for children with  
SEND in the early years.**

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# Introduction

**Welcome to the South Tyneside SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework which sets out a shared approach to identifying, planning and reviewing support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) within mainstream early years settings and schools in South Tyneside.**

Timely identification and well planned support are essential to securing positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Meeting SEND is a shared responsibility, and it is the role of everyone working with children and young people to identify needs early, respond effectively, and adapt provision accordingly as individual support needs change over time.

We are committed to South Tyneside being a place where everyone leads healthy, happy and fulfilled lives. We firmly believe that when children feel and are genuinely included in their school and community, with education support that is meaningfully tailored to their unique learning needs, they will learn, grow and achieve their full potential.

The SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework replaces the previous SEND Ranges guidance. It has been developed in response to feedback from schools, families and professionals, reflecting a shared commitment to ongoing collaboration, reflection and inclusive practice across the system. This Framework provides a clear and consistent understanding of effective SEND support and what this looks like in practice, without categorising children or setting artificial thresholds. It is grounded in a strengths-based approach promoting responsive, flexible provision that recognises and supports the diverse ways children experience and engage with learning.

All children and young people are unique, with their own strengths, needs and circumstances. This Framework recognises the importance of adapting support in ways that are responsive and meaningful to each individual. It promotes a graduated, needs led response across the four broad areas of need set out in the SEND Code of Practice, ensuring that provision is proportionate, evidence informed and centred around the child or young person.

## **The Framework is designed to be:**

- A practical and accessible tool for early identification and effective planning
- A shared reference point that builds consistency, shared language and professional confidence
- A mechanism for strengthening inclusive practice in mainstream settings
- A tool that supports high quality decision making, not a threshold or gatekeeping tool

**South Tyneside's SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework should be read and used in conjunction with South Tyneside's Ordinarily Available Provision Guide.**

*(<https://publications.southtyneside.gov.uk/reports/send-ordinarily-available-provision/>)*





# Our Inclusive Approach

South Tyneside is committed to inclusive education and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream settings. This commitment reflects duties under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Articles 7 and 24), the Equality Act 2010, and Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, all of which share a common focus on inclusion, equity and participation. At the heart of this Framework is the principle that every child is entitled to high-quality, inclusive teaching that meets their individual needs. Inclusive practice is not exclusive to any single group of children or diagnoses; it applies to all children and young people who experience barriers to learning, participation or wellbeing.

## **Our inclusive approach is underpinned by the following principles:**

1. **Recognise and celebrate our children and young people's unique strengths, abilities and interests.**
2. **Always put the voice of the child or young person and their family at the centre of planning.**
3. **Work together to agree and achieve goals that are important to the child or young person so that they can achieve their goals and ambitions.**
4. **Develop and deliver flexible environments that effectively meet the needs of all children and young people.**
5. **Ensure that there is a strong focus on effective provision which supports personal development and promotes wellbeing.**
6. **Develop and deliver a flexible curriculum that effectively meets the unique learning needs of all children and young people.**
7. **Ensure staff have the right tools and knowledge, with effective training and support to reflect and develop their teaching.**
8. **Pursue innovation, share best practice and learn from other professionals.**
9. **Work together to ensure children and young people have positive and effective transitions between stages of learning and into adulthood.**



Every individual within a mainstream setting plays a critical role in realising and delivering this vision. By strengthening inclusive practice and ensuring that support is well planned and reviewed, settings help reduce escalation, promote belonging, and improve outcomes for all children and young people.

**The purpose of the Framework is to:**

- Support early identification of need and timely, proportionate intervention
- Strengthen inclusion in mainstream settings
- Promote shared understanding and professional confidence
- Ensure children receive the right support at the right time
- Promote timely, consistent and responsive approaches to SEN Support.

The Framework supports those working within mainstream settings and schools to reflect on and adapt their practice so that environments, relationships and approaches are responsive to the diverse strengths and needs of all children and young people. It supports practice at SEN Support and sits alongside statutory processes, including Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessments and safeguarding procedures, but it does not replace them.

South Tyneside is committed to an inclusive education system where mainstream settings are supported to be the first and best option to meet the needs of most children and young people with SEND. Inclusion is not about placement alone; it is about participation, belonging, high aspirations and removing barriers to learning and development.

Inclusion extends beyond placement; it is about creating environments where all children and young people experience genuine participation, a strong sense of belonging, high aspirations, and equitable access through the removal of barriers to learning and development.

**This Framework reflects a shared belief that:**

- Children's needs are best understood in context, over time
- High quality teaching and adaptive practice benefit all learners
- Needs-led, not diagnosis-led SEND support
- Barriers to participation can arise when environments, routines or approaches do not yet fully meet the needs of the child

Inclusive practice requires settings to be reflective, flexible and responsive. It relies on strong relationships, a commitment to understanding each child as an individual, and a willingness to adapt approaches as needs change. This Framework supports settings to do this confidently and consistently.

By strengthening ordinarily available provision and ensuring that additional support is targeted and reviewed, the Framework plays a key role in improving outcomes for children and young people, reducing unnecessary escalation and supporting sustainability.

# Alignment with SEND Reforms

The SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework has been developed to align with the national direction of SEND reform, as set out in the Schools White Paper: Every Child Achieving and Thriving. The reforms are underpinned by five core principles Early, Local, Fair, Effective and Shared which together describe how the SEND system should operate to improve outcomes for children and young people.

**Early:** Children should receive the support they need as soon as possible.

**Local:** Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at a school close to their home.

**Fair:** Every school should be resourced to be able to meet common and predictable needs.

**Effective:** Effective practice is evidence based with excellent long-term outcomes.

**Shared:** Education, Health & Care Services work in partnership with one another.

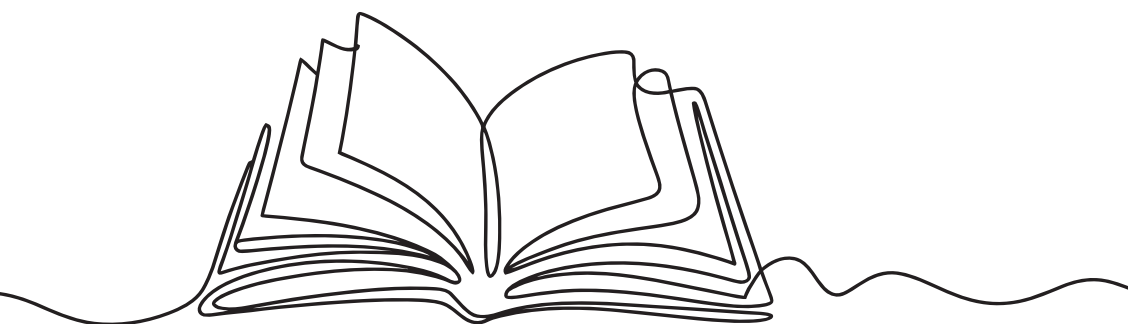
By aligning with the national SEND reform principles of Early, Local, Fair, Effective and Shared, the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework supports the development of a more consistent and inclusive SEND system, while also contributing to a more equitable and sustainable approach to SEND provision in South Tyneside.

The Framework strengthens consistency by providing a shared understanding of how SEND needs are identified, planned for and reviewed within mainstream settings. It supports inclusive practice by reinforcing high quality teaching, early intervention and graduated support as the foundation of SEND provision, ensuring that children and young people are supported within learning environments as close to their home as possible.

At the same time, the Framework supports greater equity by moving away from reliance on labels, diagnoses or thresholds, and towards evidence led decision making based on individual need and impact over time. This helps ensure that children and families experience clearer, fairer and more transparent processes universally.

By embedding effective review, purposeful adaptation of support and shared responsibility across education, health, care and families, the Framework promotes practice that is both effective and sustainable. It strengthens local capacity, supports workforce confidence, and helps reduce drift, delay and unnecessary escalation, ensuring that resources are targeted where they make the greatest difference.

Through this approach, the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework provides a strong foundation for delivering SEND support that is inclusive, equitable and focused on outcomes, supporting a SEND system that is more effective for children and young people, families, and the settings that support them.





# The Framework in Practice

The SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework provides a clear structure for assessing need, planning support and reviewing progress, ensuring that SEND support is timely, proportionate and effective.

## The Framework:

- Supports a graduated response aligned to Assess, Plan, Do, Review
- Describes graduated levels of provision, rather than fixed groupings
- Encourages early action and embeds reflective practice
- Supports evidence based planning and review

The descriptors within the Framework are organised around the four broad areas of need in the SEND Code of Practice. They are intended to support professional discussion and decision making by helping settings consider:

- Presenting strengths and needs
- Appropriate assessment and planning activity
- Adaptations, strategies and interventions
- Impact and next steps

The Framework is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used to delay referrals or statutory processes where these are appropriate. Needs may overlap across areas, may change over time, and should always be understood in the context of the child's environment and experiences.

The Framework supports understanding and should be used alongside professional judgement to inform next steps, including referrals or statutory processes where appropriate. Needs may span multiple areas, evolve over time, and are best understood within the context of the child or young person's experiences, relationships and environment

Used effectively, the Framework strengthens professional confidence, supports consistent practice, and helps ensure that children and young people receive the right support at the right time.

# Working in Partnership with Families

**Children, young people and their families must be involved at all stages of SEND identification, planning and review. Their views, experiences and aspirations provide essential insight to understanding need and shaping effective support.**

## Working in Partnership

- Listening to and valuing lived experience
- Being transparent about concerns, decisions and next steps
- Using clear, accessible language
- Reviewing support collaboratively and adapting responsively where needed

Settings are expected to work in partnership with parents, carers and children as active contributors. This includes open, meaningful dialogue about the support in place, the rationale for its implementation, and how progress and impact will be understood and measured.

The SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework supports honest, collaborative conversations and aims to reduce confusion, anxiety and inconsistency by making expectations clearer for everyone involved.

## Masking & Differences in Presentation

Children and young people may sometimes adapt or suppress how they present in school environments, consciously or unconsciously, to manage expectations, maintain relationships or feel accepted. These adaptations can occur across all areas of need and may present as a pupil appearing to manage and/or engage well, particularly in structured or predictable environments, while internally experiencing significant emotional, sensory, cognitive or social strain.

As a result, a child or young person's presentation in school may not fully reflect their level of need or wellbeing. Differences may be noticed between how a pupil presents at school and how they present at home or following the school day.

Developing a fuller understanding therefore relies on genuine, respectful partnership with families. Parent and carer insights, alongside pupil voice and ongoing shared dialogue, provide essential context that complements in school observations and assessment, supporting a more rounded and nuanced picture over time.

Where masking may be present, practitioners should focus on understanding functional impact, participation, wellbeing and

sustainability, rather than relying on outward presentation alone. This approach supports earlier identification and recognition of unmet needs, more equitable decision-making and proportionate support, in line with the graduated approach.



# Graduated Approach

In South Tyneside, we recognise the critical importance of early identification and early intervention. The right support should be available and accessible as needs are identified. Support and intervention do not rely on a child or young person receiving a formal diagnosis of a specific condition or disability. Needs are identified through observation, assessment, professional judgement and discussion with the child and their family, and provision should respond promptly and proportionately.

Each child or young person's provision will be made up of a range of support, strategies and interventions, tailored to their individual needs and circumstances. This provision should be regularly monitored, reviewed and evaluated to inform next steps. This ongoing process is known as the graduated approach, or the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycle.

## The graduated approach ensures that:

- Support is planned intentionally and based on evidence
- Strategies are implemented consistently and with fidelity
- Impact is reviewed and provision adapted accordingly
- Needs are understood clearly and holistically

Provision and support will not remain the same over time. As children and young people grow, develop skills and achieve outcomes, support should flex and adapt. For some, this may mean support is reduced or adjusted as independence increases; for others, it may mean additional or different support is required to ensure continued progress. The focus is always on responsiveness, not permanence, enabling the pupil to develop confidence and competence with using strategies, physical aids and reasonable adjustments to equitably access learning and develop autonomy and ownership of what they will need to enable participation within school and the community to live a fulfilled life.

Determining what will work best requires a collaborative approach. Children and young people, their parents or carers, the SENCO, staff within the setting, and other practitioners where appropriate should work collaboratively to identify needs, agree priorities and plan support. This shared understanding strengthens consistency, improves confidence and ensures that provision reflects the whole child.

By collaboratively implementing, evidencing and reflecting on the graduated approach over time, settings can be confident that decisions about next steps are well-informed, robust and transparent. Where a child or young person continues to experience significant and persistent barriers to participation despite carefully planned and reviewed support, this shared evidence may highlight the need to adapt provision further, potentially drawing on more targeted or specialist support to enhance access to learning.

Quality First Teaching underpins all SEND support. Every teacher is a teacher of SEND, and high quality, inclusive teaching is the foundation on which all additional support is built.

## This includes:

- High expectations for all learners
- Effective differentiation and curriculum adaptation
- Supportive, inclusive learning environments
- Skilled and well trained staff

Through strong Quality First Teaching, purposeful use of the graduated approach, and genuine partnership with families, settings can ensure that SEND support is timely, effective and focused on long term outcomes.

## Placement on the SEN Register

*In line with the SEND Code of Practice (2015), a child or young person should be placed on the SEN Register (SEN Support) where it is clear that:*

**They have a special educational need that requires provision which is additional to or different from that which is ordinarily available, and where this need cannot be met through Quality First Teaching and Ordinarily Available Provision alone.**

Within this Framework, this will typically correspond to support at a **Targeted Tier or above**, where:

- There is clear and sustained evidence that a pupil's needs persist despite well-implemented QFT and OAP,
- The pupil requires targeted, planned and reviewed support that goes beyond what is ordinarily available,
- The need has a functional impact on learning, participation, wellbeing or independence, and support requires formal coordination, monitoring and review through a SEN Support Plan.

Decisions to place a child or young person on the SEN Register must be needs led, evidence informed and proportionate. They should be based on a clear understanding of the child's functional needs and their impact over time, rather than on diagnosis, label, funding considerations or a single assessment point.

Placement on the SEN Register should **only** be considered where there is sustained evidence that a child's needs **cannot be met** through Quality First Teaching and Ordinarily Available Provision alone (Tier 1 & 2), and where support has moved to a Targeted tier or above within the graduated response. At this stage, the child requires support that is planned, targeted and reviewed, and which goes beyond inclusive strategies that should ordinarily be available.

## Education Health & Care Plans

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are intended for children and young people with the most complex and enduring needs, where those needs require co-ordinated provision across education, health and/or social care that cannot reasonably be secured through Ordinarily Available Provision or SEN Support alone.

In line with the SEND Code of Practice (0–25), the decision to consider escalation to an EHCP is not determined by a child's tier within this Framework or diagnosis. Instead, it should be needs-led and evidence-informed, drawing on a clear understanding of the child or young person's strengths and needs, how these interact with their environment to affect learning and wellbeing, and the sustainability of current support over time.



### **Escalation may be appropriate where there is clear, consistent evidence that:**

- The child or young person has significant and persistent needs that continue despite well-planned, implemented and reviewed support through the graduated approach
- Needs require specialist, highly individualised input that cannot reasonably be delivered or sustained through considerable adaptation to mainstream SEN Support
- Provision requires formal coordination and accountability across multiple services, beyond what can be secured through existing arrangements
- Without such coordinated planning, the child or young person is at risk of significant unmet need, reduced access to education, or compromised outcomes

The SEND Reforms emphasise a strengthened, inclusive mainstream system in which most children and young people's needs are met early and locally, without an EHCP, and where statutory plans are reserved for those, whose needs are most complex and specialist in nature. This Framework supports that direction by promoting robust SEN Support, early intervention, and effective review, while recognising that a small number of children and young people will appropriately require an EHCP where sustained, complex coordination of support is needed.

Where escalation is being considered, discussion should be transparent, collaborative and proportionate, involving the child or young person, their family and relevant professionals. The focus should remain on what is needed to enable meaningful participation, progress and wellbeing, rather than on processes or labels.

### **Accountability, Leadership and System Alignment**

Effective SEND provision relies on strong leadership, shared accountability and a whole setting approach. Leaders, including governors, are expected to demonstrate a clear commitment to inclusive, aspirational SEND practice.

#### **This includes:**

- Regular scrutiny of outcomes for children and young people with SEND
- Oversight of SEND practice, provision and workforce development
- Ensuring reasonable adjustments are embedded and evidenced
- Monitoring the impact of interventions and use of resources

SENDCOs play a critical strategic role and must be appropriately qualified and supported, with clear responsibility for ensuring that the right support is in place. However, accountability for SEND outcomes sits with all leaders and staff.

#### **This Framework aligns with wider system priorities, including:**

- Strengthening ordinarily available provision
- Workforce development and SEND expertise
- Preparation for Adulthood across 0–25
- Effective use of resources to remove barriers to learning

The Framework is intended to support reflection, improvement and shared learning across the system, ensuring that SEND provision in South Tyneside is inclusive, consistent and focused on positive outcomes.



# Links to Early Help, Children with Disabilities and Safeguarding Thresholds

The SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework sits alongside South Tyneside's wider system of support for children, young people and families, including Early Help, Children with Disabilities (CWD) services and safeguarding processes. While these systems are connected, they remain distinct and serve different purposes.

Thresholds describe points at which a child or family's circumstances may change, indicating a need for different types or levels of support. They help professionals to consider when dialogue is needed with families and partner agencies to reflect on what has changed, what support is currently in place, and whether anything needs to happen differently.

In South Tyneside, Early Help and Family Help interventions are designed to respond to the level of need within the wider family context, recognising that needs may change over time and may move between levels of support.

While the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework supports identification and planning of educational SEND support, identification of SEND does not automatically require an Early Help Assessment. SEND and Early Help are separate processes. Where a child's needs can be met appropriately within education, an Early Help Assessment may not be necessary.

SENDCOs and setting leaders should understand the continuum of support and use professional judgement to determine when an Early Help Assessment is appropriate. Where a child or young person and their family are likely to benefit from coordinated multi agency support through a Team Around the Family, consideration should be given to initiating an Early Help Assessment.

Where a child or young person has a substantial or life limiting disability and requires specialist social care assessment or support, involvement from the Children with Disabilities Team may be appropriate. Where there are concerns that a child or young person may be at risk of abuse or harm, including where vulnerability is increased due to disability, safeguarding procedures must be followed and a referral made in line with safeguarding thresholds.

These examples are not exhaustive. In practice, professionals should consider SEND support alongside Early Help, social care and safeguarding thresholds, working collaboratively with families and partner agencies to ensure children and young people receive the right support at the right time.

**Universal:** Needs are met through universal services and inclusive provision, using early intervention and reasonable adjustments within education and community settings.

**Prevention:** Children, young people and families have some additional needs that require enhanced support. This may involve targeted community services such as Health Visiting, Children's Centres or other universal-plus offers.

**Specialist:** More intensive, coordinated support is required where needs are more complex. This may include targeted Early Help or Child in Need (CIN) support and can span across Levels 3 and 4 depending on circumstances.

**Acute:** Specialist assessment indicates the need for complex, intensive and structured interventions, including statutory social care involvement and specialist services.

# Preparing for Adulthood

Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) begins at the earliest stage of a child's life and continues through to adulthood. It is not a discrete phase or event, but a continuous process that develops over time, from early communication, feeding, play, making choices and building independence, through to adulthood and participation in community life.

In South Tyneside, Preparation for Adulthood is embedded as a core purpose of SEND support. Our early years settings and schools should shape their curriculum, provision and support around the needs, strengths and aspirations of the child or young person, regardless of disability or level of need. This ensures that all children and young people with SEND are supported to develop the skills, confidence and resilience they need for their next stage of life.

The PfA outcomes provide a clear and coherent framework for curriculum development and planning from 0–25, building on the excellent practice that already exists across our settings. The four PfA outcome areas Employment, Independent Living, Friends, Relationships and Community, and Good Health, offer a shared lens through which learning experiences, support strategies and longer term aspirations can be planned and reviewed.

**Using the PfA outcomes as a guiding framework supports:**

- Ambitious, outcomes focused curriculum design
- Coherent planning across phases and settings
- Meaningful transitions that build on prior learning and progress
- Realistic, aspirational Education, Health and Care planning

Effective Preparation for Adulthood is not limited by age, phase or level of support. Parents, carers, children, young people and professionals are encouraged to consider the full range of PfA outcomes ensuring that planning remains aspirational and forward looking. This approach promotes continuity, reduces fragmentation and helps ensure that support and learning are meaningful and purposeful.

The PfA outcomes are not exhaustive; they offer a flexible framework rather than a fixed pathway. Parents, young people and professionals should work together to build upon this framework, creating rich and meaningful experiences across education settings, the home and the local community.

By embedding Preparation for Adulthood at the heart of SEND provision, South Tyneside is strengthening an equitable, consistent, inclusive and sustainable SEND system, ensuring that children and young people with SEND are not only supported to succeed in education, but are enabled to lead fulfilling, independent and meaningful lives as active members of their communities.



| Age Range          | Education & Employment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Independent Living                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Friends, Relationships & Community                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Good Health                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>0-4 years</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engages in play-based learning and familiar routines, developing early attention, listening and participation skills.</li> <li>Explores real-world and role-play activities, beginning to develop awareness of different roles and experiences.</li> <li>Shows interest in activities and resources and begins to make choices between experiences.</li> <li>Develops early communication, interaction and curiosity that support learning and future participation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes simple choices within daily routines, including play, snack and mealtimes.</li> <li>Participates in self-care routines with adult support appropriate to their needs.</li> <li>Develops early independence skills through everyday activities and play.</li> <li>Begins to develop awareness of safety within familiar environments.</li> </ul>                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engages in shared play and group activities, developing early social interaction with peers.</li> <li>Begins to form relationships and recognise familiar adults and children.</li> <li>Participates in nursery and community activities with appropriate support.</li> <li>Develops early understanding of turn-taking and social interaction.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participates in routines that support physical health and wellbeing.</li> <li>Develops awareness of basic feelings and emotions and begins to express needs.</li> <li>Attends health appointments with adult support.</li> <li>Engages in physical activity appropriate to their needs, supporting wellbeing and development.</li> </ul>                                                                                    |
| <b>5-7 years</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engages in classroom routines and learning activities, developing early attention, listening and participation skills.</li> <li>Explores learning through play and structured activities, building early literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills.</li> <li>Begins to develop awareness of "growing up" and early ideas about different jobs, roles and aspirations through play, stories and real-world experiences.</li> </ul>                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participates in self-care routines (e.g. dressing, toileting, eating) with appropriate support and encouragement.</li> <li>Develops early independence skills through everyday routines, including understanding time, following simple instructions and making choices.</li> <li>Begins to explore food preparation and household tasks through supported, play-based experiences.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Builds early friendships and social connections through shared play and group activities.</li> <li>Participates in team games, clubs and community activities with adjustments as needed.</li> <li>Begins to understand social rules and turn-taking in familiar settings.</li> </ul>                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops understanding of healthy routines, including physical activity, food choices and rest.</li> <li>Attends health appointments (e.g. dental, vision, hearing) with adult support.</li> <li>Communicates basic health needs and seeks adult support when unwell or distressed.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                              |
| <b>8-11 years</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accesses careers-related learning through inclusive activities such as role-model visits, projects and discussions.</li> <li>Begins to identify personal interests, strengths and preferences related to learning and future aspirations.</li> <li>Develops skills needed to make informed choices about learning activities and next steps.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops practical life skills such as using money, basic cooking, understanding transport and managing personal belongings, with support as required.</li> <li>Moves confidently around the school environment, using strategies and adaptations where needed.</li> <li>Seeks help and guidance appropriately to support growing independence.</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Builds and maintains friendships through shared interests and activities.</li> <li>Participates in after-school clubs, youth groups and community activities with increasing confidence.</li> <li>Develops understanding of safety in the community and online, identifying trusted adults for support.</li> </ul>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begins to understand and manage minor health needs with adult support.</li> <li>Develops awareness of physical changes associated with growth and puberty.</li> <li>Makes healthy choices related to food, exercise and emotional wellbeing, supported by adults.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>11-16 years</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands a range of education, training and employment pathways (e.g. GCSEs, vocational routes, supported employment).</li> <li>Makes informed subject and course choices aligned to interests, strengths and longer-term goals.</li> <li>Accesses work experience, volunteering or part-time opportunities with appropriate preparation and support.</li> <li>Develops a personal profile of achievements, skills and interests to support future transitions.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops independent living skills including cooking, travel, money management, timekeeping and personal organisation, with scaffolding as required.</li> <li>Demonstrates increasing responsibility for daily routines and decision-making.</li> <li>Transitions between settings with structured planning and familiar support</li> </ul>                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains friendships and participates in community activities aligned with personal interests.</li> <li>Understands social norms, boundaries and relationships across different contexts, including online.</li> <li>Builds resilience and confidence to manage change, challenge and new situations.</li> </ul>                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands sexual health, relationships and consent as part of preparation for adulthood.</li> <li>Manages more complex health needs with increasing confidence and independence.</li> <li>Understands risks associated with drugs, alcohol and online activity and applies strategies to stay safe.</li> <li>Accesses emotional and mental health support appropriately and develops strategies for wellbeing.</li> </ul> |

# Guidance for Early Years

This section applies to mainstream early years provision, including nursery schools, nursery classes and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) early years settings. It supports settings in identifying, planning for and reviewing support for children with SEND within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

## Inclusive Early Years Practice: Guiding Principles

High quality early years provision provides the foundation for learning, development and wellbeing throughout a child's life. The EYFS statutory framework sets out how adults should support children to develop their personalities, talents and abilities, ensuring that all children have the best possible start, regardless of background, language, learning difference or disability.

**Early years SEND practice in South Tyneside is underpinned by the following principles:**

- Every child is unique, developing at their own pace and in their own way.
- Children's developmental stage is more significant than chronological age.
- Children's experiences are shaped by a wide range of factors, including birth history, health, family circumstances, socio economic context and mobility.
- Secure relationships, high-quality interactions and support for healthy attachment are essential to understanding each child and creating conditions in which they can thrive.
- Inclusive early years practice depends on practitioners knowing children well, creating enabling environments, and responding flexibly to emerging needs.

## Assessment in the Early Years

Assessment in the Early Years should be child-centred, strengths-based and proportionate, supporting early identification of need and effective planning within the graduated approach. It is a continuous, reflective process that supports practitioners to build a holistic understanding of each child's development over time and to adapt provision in responsive and inclusive ways. Assessment should draw on a range of complementary perspectives, including professional observation, family insight and nationally recognised frameworks, to develop a coherent and well rounded understanding of each child's strengths, development and progress.

**Within South Tyneside, early years settings are expected to draw on the following recommended frameworks and guidance to support consistent, high-quality assessment for children with SEND:**

- Development Matters
- Birth to 5 Matters
- DfE Early Years SEND Assessment Guidance

These frameworks are intended to support professional judgement, not replace it. They should be used flexibly and in context, recognising that children's development is not linear and that progress may be uneven.

**Effective early years assessment should:**

- Be ongoing and embedded within everyday practice
- Draw on multiple sources of evidence, including parental views
- Be informed by practitioner observation and professional judgement
- Link clearly to planning, provision and review
- Avoid over-assessment or reliance on checklists

Assessment information should be gathered through observation, interaction and dialogue, and may include progress checks and development reviews (including the two-year-old check), moderation with colleagues, and discussion with external professionals where appropriate.

Assessment must feed directly into the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycle, supporting timely intervention, meaningful review and clear communication with families and professionals.

The learning environment is central to effective early years SEND support. Practitioners should routinely reflect on the environment, resources and routines to ensure they support access, engagement and learning for all children, and that assessment information informs both environmental adaptations and teaching approaches.



### Identifying & Responding to Need in the Early Years

Early years providers are required under the SEND Code of Practice to have arrangements in place to identify and respond to SEND. This is a shared responsibility across all practitioners, with the SENDCo providing guidance, coordination and leadership.

**Where a child is not making expected progress, particularly in the prime areas of development (Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal, Social and Emotional Development), practitioners should:**

- Review progress information over time
- Consider environmental, relational and teaching factors
- Explore whether medical, sensory or physical needs may be influencing access and participation
- Draw on parental insight and external advice where appropriate

For many children, needs become clearer through ongoing observation and graduated support, rather than immediate categorisation. Identification should remain needs led, not diagnosis led. Support in the early years does not automatically require additional staffing. Early intervention may include:

- Adaptations to the environment
- Changes to routines and interaction styles
- Targeted support within everyday activities
- Practitioner training and development

### Transitions in the Early Years

Transitions are a critical aspect of early years practice and should be viewed as a process, not an event. Children may be entering group provision for the first time, and practitioners should thoughtfully consider each child's prior experiences within their home and community to ensure continuity, security and positive engagement.

**Effective transition is underpinned by:**

- Early planning and preparation
- Strong communication with parents and carers
- Sharing of relevant information
- Planned visits and opportunities to familiarise
- Thoughtful settling in arrangements and follow up

Where children with SEND are moving between settings or into school, transition planning should be more detailed and may involve the SENDCo, key person and, where appropriate, other professionals. The originating setting is responsible for ensuring that information is shared in line with local authority transition guidance. Good transition practice for children with SEND builds on good practice for all children, supporting continuity, confidence and successful inclusion.

## Local Authority Support

South Tyneside Council is committed to supporting early identification, inclusive practice and timely intervention for children with SEND in the early years. The Local Authority plays a key role in enabling settings to meet children's needs as early as possible, reducing barriers to learning and promoting positive outcomes.

### The Local Authority aims to:

- Strengthen the capacity and confidence of the workforce to meet SEND effectively
- Promote early identification and intervention, reducing delay and escalation
- Support consistent, high quality SEND practice across settings
- Enable strong partnership working between education, health, social care and families
- Support smooth and well planned transitions between settings and phases of education

### In line with the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework, the Local Authority supports settings by:

- Providing advice, guidance and professional support to practitioners and SENDCOs in implementing the SEND Code of Practice and the graduated approach
- Supporting settings to respond confidently to a wide range of needs through inclusive practice, Quality First Teaching and proportionate intervention
- Facilitating multi-agency working, where appropriate, to support children and families effectively
- Promoting and sharing effective SEND practice across early years settings and schools
- Supporting settings with referrals to additional services, where needs cannot be met through ordinarily available provision
- Providing ongoing training and professional development, including SENDCO development and workforce learning opportunities
- Encouraging clear, open communication between settings, families and professionals
- Supporting monitoring, review and transition, ensuring continuity of support as children move between settings and into school

The Local Authority plays a key role in enabling and strengthening inclusive practice, working alongside settings rather than replacing their responsibility to meet children's needs. Decisions about provision should be shaped through collaborative partnership, drawing on evidence over time, professional expertise and meaningful engagement with families.

Settings are encouraged to seek advice early, engage in professional dialogue, and use the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework as a shared reference point when planning, delivering and reviewing support for children and young people with SEND.

Further information about local support, training opportunities and services is available through the South Tyneside SEND Local Offer (<https://sendlocaloffer.southtyneside.gov.uk/>) and SEND Professionals Portal ([https://southtynesidegovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/EXT\\_SEND\\_LO\\_Professionals\\_Portal\\_GRP\\_STC](https://southtynesidegovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/EXT_SEND_LO_Professionals_Portal_GRP_STC)).



## SEND Funding in the Early Years

For a small number of children with more complex SEND, additional funding may be available to support settings to put targeted, time limited provision in place as part of a graduated response.

**Early Years SEND funding in South Tyneside is underpinned by the following principles:**

- Funding supports inclusion, not exclusion
- Funding is needs led and evidence informed, not diagnosis led
- Funding is used to enhance provision, not replace ordinarily available support
- Funding is time limited and reviewed, as part of Assess, Plan, Do, Review
- Funding decisions are made in partnership with families

## Disability Access Fund

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) is additional funding available to help early years providers make reasonable adjustments for children aged 2–4 with SEND who are accessing their funded early education entitlement.

**DAF is intended to support:**

- Improvements to physical access
- Purchase or loan of specialist equipment or resources
- Environmental adaptations to support inclusion

DAF is allocated as a one off annual payment per eligible child, administered by South Tyneside Council. Funding is linked to the child rather than the setting, and parents/carers nominate the setting where the funding is paid.

Resources purchased through DAF remain the property of the provider and can be used to support current and future children, where appropriate.

## Early Years SEND Funding

Early Years SEND Funding (EYSF) is available to support early years settings working with funded 2 , 3 and 4 year olds who have emerging or more complex SEND that cannot be met through ordinarily available provision alone.

**EYSF:**

- Supports short term, targeted intervention
- Requires evidence of Assess, Plan, Do, Review
- Is provided with parental consent and co production
- Forms part of a graduated response

**Applications must clearly demonstrate:**

- How additional funding will enhance provision
- The intended outcomes and review arrangements
- The child's identified needs
- What support is already in place

Where funding is agreed, settings are expected to evidence the impact of the additional support on the child's progress, as part of review and monitoring processes. Funding should always be considered alongside, not instead of, high quality teaching, enabling environments and strong partnership with families.

Further information about Early Years SEND funding, eligibility and application processes is available through the South Tyneside SEND Professionals Portal ([https://southtynesidegovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/EXT\\_SEND\\_LO\\_Professionals\\_Portal\\_GRP\\_STC](https://southtynesidegovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/EXT_SEND_LO_Professionals_Portal_GRP_STC)).



# Applying the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework in the Early Years

**This section relates to children in the EYFS, from birth to the end of the Reception year. The SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework supports early years settings to identify, plan for and review SEND support in a consistent, inclusive and graduated way.**

For children in their Reception year, the Primary and Secondary sections of the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework should be used in conjunction with the Early Years guidance, as part of a planned transition into statutory schooling. The SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework is underpinned by a graduated response where support is layered, refined and reviewed over time, in response to the child's evolving needs.

## **Identifying the Appropriate Tier**

Collect a broad range of information about the child's development and needs. This should include any information gathered from other professionals involved in the child's support and parent/carer views.

**When identifying the appropriate tier of support for the child, presenting needs must not be used in isolation, and must be considered as a combination of:**

- The child's developmental stage,
- The provision and support currently in place and
- The impact evidence over time through the APDR cycle.

**Start at Universal and at each tier review whether:**

- The descriptors match the child's presenting needs
- The provision described at this level is already in place
- There is evidence that support is consistent, routine and used by all adults

**Where a child's presenting needs appear to align with a higher tier of support practitioners must first review the provision and support that is currently in place, including:**

- Assessment and planning processes
- Teaching, learning and curriculum adaptations
- Intervention strategies and environmental adjustments.

**A child should only be considered as requiring a higher tier of support where both of the following conditions are met:**

1. Presenting needs are consistent with the descriptors at that tier; and
2. There is clear evidence that:
  - Provision has been implemented appropriately and consistently
  - Strategies have been in place for a sufficient period to judge impact
  - Progress has been reviewed through APDR
  - Needs remain consistent over time despite embedded, well-established support.

**If a child's presenting needs appear to sit at a higher tier, but the provision at lower tiers has not been fully implemented or applied consistently, this should be treated as a provision gap and not an indication of higher need. In these circumstances, practitioners should:**

- Implement the relevant strategies and interventions with fidelity,
- Ensure consistency across staff, routines and environments,
- Allow sufficient time for impact and
- Re-view progress through the APDR cycle.

Progressing to a higher tier without embedding the previous tier's strategies risks overlooking opportunities for effective support and may lead to unnecessary escalation.

In most cases, children will move up and down through tiers of support as part of this process. However, the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework also recognises that professional judgement must be applied in exceptional circumstances.

There may be a small number of children whose needs are immediately significant, complex or acute, such that it would not be appropriate or in the child's best interests to work sequentially through all previous tiers of support before increasing provision. In these cases, a child may require a higher level of support at an earlier stage. This might include situations where a child presents with significant developmental differences across multiple areas or where there is clear evidence of complex need from the outset, including information from health or specialist professionals.

Where the needs present a risk to the child's wellbeing, safety or ability to access provision without additional support or a delay in increasing support would be likely to result in harm, exclusion or significant distress, progression to a higher tier of support may be appropriate without extended time at earlier tiers.

**Where this is appropriate the decision should be:**

- Grounded in robust professional judgement
- Supported by clear evidence and rationale
- Taken in partnership with parents/carers
- Clearly documented within the APDR cycle.

In these cases where professional judgement is used to move directly to a higher tier of support, settings must ensure that the decision-making progress is transparent and clear with clarity about which elements of provision are being prioritised immediately.

# Early Years Graduated Approach

This section sets out the graduated approach within the Early Years, across all four broad areas of need, outlining how children's needs are identified, monitored and reviewed, and how support is delivered in practice through adaptations, interventions and staffing arrangements.

| Tier                  | Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Inclusive Teaching                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Learning Environment & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| <b>Universal</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality First Teaching informed by ongoing observation and understanding of child development within the EYFS.</li> <li>Progress monitored holistically through routine observation, interaction and regular dialogue with parents/carers.</li> <li>Assessment for learning informs planning, with adaptations made to support access and engagement.</li> <li>Planning recognises children's learning styles, interests and developmental stage, rather than chronological age.</li> <li>Child and family voice is central to assessment and planning.</li> <li>Practitioners routinely observe, reflect and adapt their practice to support children's development within the universal provision in partnership with parents/carers.</li> <li>A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is in place where appropriate</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All practitioners share responsibility for inclusion, access and participation.</li> <li>Support is provided by all Early Years Practitioners as part of high-quality everyday practice.</li> <li>Children are supported by familiar adults through the setting's usual staffing arrangements and routines.</li> <li>Staff have a shared understanding of child development, inclusive practice and the Early Years Foundation Stage.</li> <li>Ongoing professional development and reflective practice support staff confidence in meeting a wide range of developmental and learning needs.</li> <li>The key person plays a central role in building secure relationships, knowing the child well and responding to emerging needs through everyday interaction.</li> <li>Consistent approaches, language and expectations are used by all adults to support communication, emotional regulation, engagement and participation.</li> <li>Familiar adults and predictable routines support children's emotional security, belonging and trust.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning takes place through play based, hands on experiences that promote exploration, curiosity and interaction.</li> <li>A language rich and communication friendly environment supports understanding, expression and interaction for all children.</li> <li>Songs, stories, rhymes, repetition and shared talk are embedded naturally within everyday routines and play.</li> <li>Visual, auditory and multi sensory information (including objects, real materials, photos, gestures and movement) forms part of everyday practice and is accessible to all children.</li> <li>Learning materials, routines and activities are presented in clear, consistent and meaningful ways.</li> <li>Predictable routines and well supported transitions help children feel safe, secure and ready to learn.</li> <li>Calm, welcoming learning spaces support emotional wellbeing, regulation and a sense of belonging.</li> <li>Opportunities for quiet play, rest and emotional recovery are built into the day.</li> <li>Resources are accessible and organised to encourage independence, exploration, play and communication.</li> <li>Provision supports participation and interaction without reliance on specialist or individualised equipment.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Universal Plus</b> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategies and adjustments implemented consistently prior to formal identification, with a planned period of monitoring (typically at least half a term).</li> <li>Assessment is supplemented with additional focused observations across a range of contexts (e.g. free play, outdoors, transitions).</li> <li>Focused observation is used to identify patterns, triggers or contextual factors that affect participation, communication, learning or emotional regulation.</li> <li>Monitoring focuses on what is in place, how it is used in practice, and the impact over time.</li> <li>Regular review (termly or half-termly as appropriate) of progress in relation to the EYFS and developmental stage.</li> <li>Assessment for learning continues to inform adapted planning.</li> <li>Where a child attends more than one setting, assessment and planning are shared to support consistency.</li> <li>A learning environment risk assessment may be completed where appropriate.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support is more purposeful and focused, based on identified areas of need and agreed strategies.</li> <li>All practitioners working with the child share a clear understanding of the child's emerging or identified needs and the approaches being used to support them.</li> <li>Strategies are implemented consistently within everyday practice, in line with South Tyneside's Ordinarily Available Provision Guide.</li> <li>The key person remains responsible for the child's learning and development and coordinates additional modelling, guidance and support through familiar relationships.</li> <li>Adult support is deployed flexibly during aspects of the day or learning that present increased challenge, such as transitions, group activities or sustained unstructured play.</li> <li>Adjustments to routines, environments and curriculum delivery are made intentionally to reduce barriers and increase access.</li> <li>Any additional support is planned, time limited and reviewed over an agreed period, with clear evidence considered to understand progress and ongoing need.</li> <li>Staff training or advice needs linked to agreed strategies are identified and addressed where necessary.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to the Universal offer, learning experiences are adapted more intentionally to support identified needs while remaining play based and inclusive.</li> <li>Visual supports, prompts, modelling and environmental cues are used consistently across indoor, outdoor and transition times to support understanding, predictability and emotional security.</li> <li>Hands on resources and real objects are used purposefully to support meaning making, exploration and engagement across learning activities.</li> <li>Repetition is planned and embedded across songs, stories, routines and play experiences to support consolidation and generalisation of skills.</li> <li>Activities and play opportunities are more deliberately structured to support access, interaction and sustained engagement, while continuing to encourage independence.</li> <li>Children are given planned opportunities to practise and apply skills, including communication and interaction, across a range of play contexts and experiences.</li> <li>Environmental and routine adjustments are made to reduce emotional or sensory pressure at key points in the day.</li> <li>Calming and regulating activities and resources are embedded within the environment and daily routines to support emotional regulation as part of everyday practice.</li> </ul> |

| Tier          | Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Inclusive Teaching                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Learning Environment & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| Targeted      | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENDCo involvement to support observation and review where a child is not making expected progress despite embedded Universal and Universal Plus provision.</li> <li>• Use of recommended assessment frameworks to support a small-step, developmental approach.</li> <li>• A SEND Support Plan is in place, outlining provision, strategies and deployment of staff, reviewed termly or half-termly in partnership with parents/carers.</li> <li>• Referrals to additional services considered where appropriate (e.g. Inclusion Service, SALT, OT).</li> <li>• Support for parents/carers discussed, including Early Help where appropriate.</li> <li>• Parents/carers are signposted to the SEND Local Offer.</li> <li>• Targeted support and interventions are monitored closely, with clear evidence showing what is in place, how it is delivered and the impact over time.</li> </ul>             | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support is planned, delivered and reviewed to address specific, identified needs.</li> <li>• Time limited small group or individual support is implemented as part of a clear plan and monitored to evaluate impact.</li> <li>• Targeted interventions are embedded within everyday practice and are focused on developing specific skills, including communication, interaction, regulation and engagement.</li> <li>• Additional adult support is planned and used purposefully to support learning, peer interaction, emotional regulation and sustained engagement.</li> <li>• Adults supporting the child use agreed and consistent approaches to strengthen relationships and support emotional regulation.</li> <li>• Advice from relevant professionals (for example, Speech and Language Therapy) is used to inform strategies and targeted interventions.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elements of the environment are adapted consistently and systematically to reduce identified barriers to learning and participation.</li> <li>• Visual supports, prompts and structured resources are used routinely across activities, interactions and transitions, forming an integrated part of daily practice rather than occasional support.</li> <li>• Learning materials and activities are carefully designed and structured to reduce cognitive and/or language overload, with clear expectations and cues to support understanding.</li> <li>• Learning and communication opportunities are deliberately repeated across the day and week to support retention, consolidation and generalisation of skills.</li> <li>• Environmental adaptations are implemented consistently to reduce communication barriers and support access across indoor, outdoor and shared spaces.</li> <li>• Predictable routines are embedded throughout the day to support emotional regulation, engagement and participation.</li> <li>• Calm or low stimulus spaces are used in a planned and purposeful way to support emotional regulation and readiness for learning.</li> <li>• Regulation resources are selected to match the child's emotional and sensory profile and are used consistently across routines and learning experiences.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Targeted Plus | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External professionals (e.g. Educational Psychology, Portage &amp; Preschool Service, specialist teachers) contribute to assessment, planning and review with advice and recommendations clearly recorded within support plans.</li> <li>• Advice and recommendations from external professionals are implemented consistently.</li> <li>• Support is evaluated regularly against impact on learning, communication, engagement, wellbeing and emotional regulation, and adjusted accordingly.</li> <li>• Impact of interventions is monitored closely, with oversight from the SENDCo and contributing professionals.</li> <li>• Where Therapeutic Services (OT, SALT) are involved, services monitor and review progress made in response to advice implemented consistently by the setting.</li> <li>• Direct input from relevant external agencies in line with agreed criteria and thresholds.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing and support are deployed more intensively, consistently and predictably to meet persistent and complex needs.</li> <li>• Adult support is increased in frequency and consistency across the day, with familiar adults providing structured, reliable and sustained support.</li> <li>• Additional adult support provides targeted input on an individual or small group basis, under the direction of the teacher or key worker.</li> <li>• Adult support is carefully structured and purposeful, focusing on skill development, communication, interaction, emotional regulation and participation, while promoting independence.</li> <li>• Teaching, activities and materials are adapted more explicitly to secure key learning outcomes, informed by the child's learning profile and developmental stage.</li> <li>• Adults working with the child have a detailed shared understanding of the child's learning profile and emotional needs, and use agreed approaches consistently within everyday routines.</li> <li>• The teacher and key worker implement external professional advice with SENDCo or Nursery Manager oversight to ensure fidelity and impact.</li> <li>• Staff working directly with the child are trained to support alternative and/or augmentative communication, where required.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learning environment is carefully engineered to reduce cognitive, communication, sensory and emotional load.</li> <li>• Visual supports, prompts and structured resources are embedded consistently across all activities, interactions and transitions, forming a constant feature of the learning environment.</li> <li>• Activities are highly structured and predictable, with clear starts, middles and ends, to support understanding, engagement and task completion.</li> <li>• Learning and communication opportunities are repeated frequently across different play contexts to support consolidation and generalisation of key skills.</li> <li>• Distractions are minimised through clear organisation of space, routines and resources to support focus, regulation and sustained engagement.</li> <li>• Highly concrete, hands on and multi sensory resources are selected to match the child's developmental level and are prioritised over abstract materials.</li> <li>• Learning materials and expectations are intentionally simplified and prioritised to focus on key foundational skills.</li> <li>• The environment is intentionally structured to reduce emotional, sensory and social uncertainty throughout the day.</li> <li>• Environmental adjustments are used proactively and consistently to minimise emotional and sensory demand and prevent escalation.</li> <li>• Regulation resources are embedded throughout the setting and used as part of everyday routines, rather than in isolated or reactive moments.</li> <li>• Safe, familiar spaces are used proactively to support regulation, preparation for learning and emotional recovery.</li> </ul> |

| Tier       | Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Inclusive Teaching                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Learning Environment & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| Specialist | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SENCO has a central, active role in coordinating provision, monitoring impact and guiding practice.</li> <li>Continued implementation of strategies and interventions in line with recommendations from relevant professionals.</li> <li>Highly individualised planning reflects complexity and persistence of need.</li> <li>Planning is led by specialist advice and focuses on sustaining engagement, access and developmental readiness.</li> <li>Progress and sustainability within mainstream provision are reviewed regularly, with evidence informing decisions about whether current arrangements remain appropriate.</li> <li>Input from specialist professionals (e.g. Educational Psychology, Portage &amp; Preschool Service, specialist teachers) is integral and ongoing, this may not be in an advisory only capacity.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staffing arrangements are highly individualised to provide continuous and consistent support required for the child to access learning throughout the school day.</li> <li>Additional adults work closely with the class teacher to implement highly personalised approaches that are informed by specialist advice and tailored to the child's profile.</li> <li>Practice is strongly informed by ongoing specialist input, with advice and recommendations embedded into everyday routines rather than delivered as discrete or separate activities.</li> <li>Specialist input is regular and ongoing, with approaches reviewed in partnership with relevant multi agency professionals to ensure they remain appropriate and effective.</li> <li>Adults working with the child have a detailed and shared understanding of the child's needs, including triggers and patterns of regulation, and respond consistently across staff and settings.</li> <li>Support is carefully coordinated to ensure that approaches remain consistent across routines, spaces and members of staff, reducing uncertainty and supporting emotional security.</li> <li>Adults provide sustained co regulation and reassurance during periods of heightened distress, anxiety or withdrawal.</li> <li>Support is proactive as well as responsive, with adults anticipating times of vulnerability, adjusting expectations and adapting support to prevent escalation.</li> <li>Carefully structured group experiences are used alongside individualised support to promote inclusion, participation and social connection where appropriate.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The learning environment is highly adapted and intentionally structured around the child's individual profile.</li> <li>The environment is designed to minimise cognitive, sensory, emotional and social overload, enabling the child to feel safe, settled and ready to engage throughout the day.</li> <li>Visual, concrete and sensory supports are embedded consistently across all spaces, activities and transitions and form an integral part of everyday practice.</li> <li>Routines are highly predictable, with clear structure, consistent expectations and familiar adult support across the day.</li> <li>Predictability is prioritised across all aspects of the setting, including where activities take place, who supports the child and how routines unfold, to reduce anxiety and uncertainty.</li> <li>Learning spaces are calm, familiar and low demand, with minimal change and clear visual cues to support emotional security and confidence.</li> <li>Environmental demands (such as noise, movement, group size and sensory input) are carefully managed and adjusted in response to the child's emotional presentation.</li> <li>Safe, familiar spaces are a core part of the child's day and are used proactively to support regulation, emotional recovery and preparation to re engage with learning.</li> <li>Resources are specialist, developmentally appropriate and often individualised, selected carefully to avoid overload and prioritise materials the child finds meaningful, reassuring or motivating.</li> <li>Resources and experiences are used repeatedly over time to build familiarity, understanding and meaning.</li> <li>Learning opportunities are carefully prioritised and limited, focusing on sustained, meaningful engagement rather than quantity or coverage.</li> <li>Regulation resources and sensory supports are always available and used flexibly throughout the day to support emotional recovery, wellbeing and participation.</li> <li>The environment supports learning, recognising that time and space to feel calm is essential for access, engagement and inclusion.</li> </ul> |



## Cognition & Learning

In the Early Years, cognition and learning describe how young children begin to think, explore, and understand the world through play, interaction, and everyday experiences. Children develop these skills through play, interaction, repetition, and hands-on experiences. Some children may need extra support with their learning if they take longer to develop new skills or need more repetition and adult guidance, even when activities are well adapted and inclusive.

When considering cognition and learning needs in the Early Years, it is important to take account of a child's overall experiences, including attendance patterns, transitions, and any gaps in learning that may affect their progress. Children should have access to a broad, balanced, and engaging EYFS curriculum, with high-quality adult interactions and quality-first teaching that builds on what they already know and can do.

Cognition and learning needs in the Early Years may be broad, affecting learning across many areas, or more specific, linked to skills such as attention, memory, language, early literacy, or numeracy. These needs may be temporary or ongoing, and progress should be reviewed regularly through observation, assessment, and discussion with parents and carers. It is important to notice and celebrate small steps of progress, allowing children time to practise and secure new skills before moving on.

Many young children will show a mix of strengths and areas for development. For example, a child may enjoy stories, songs, and imaginative play but need extra support to follow instructions, remember what to do next or sustain attention to complete tasks. Some children may experience differences in language development linked to variations in early language experiences or because they are learning English as an additional language (EAL). EAL is not a special educational need in itself, though some children may also have additional speech, language or social communication needs. A thoughtful, holistic approach is important to understand how each child communicates and to identify the support that will best enable their participation and development.

| Tier                  | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Universal</b>      | <p>Developing their thinking and learning skills in line with typical early childhood development. They May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be learning through play, exploration and hands-on experiences.</li> <li>• Be developing early attention, listening and understanding skills.</li> <li>• Learn at different rates and show strengths in some areas more than others.</li> <li>• Need things repeated, shown again or modelled to help understanding.</li> <li>• Sometimes need extra time to try things out or complete activities.</li> <li>• Be starting to remember and use what they have learned, though not always consistently.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>High-quality Early Years practice includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm, responsive adult interaction and shared attention.</li> <li>• Clear modelling, showing children what to do.</li> <li>• Using simple language, repetition and key words.</li> <li>• Breaking activities into small, manageable steps.</li> <li>• Giving children time to think, respond and try things independently.</li> <li>• Providing choices, using their interests as motivators and offering a balance of adult led and child led activities to increase participation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Universal Plus</b> | <p>Showing learning differences then what would be typically expected for a child their age and stage. These may affect how they access everyday learning. They May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make slower progress in some areas of learning.</li> <li>• Need more repetition or adult support to understand new ideas.</li> <li>• Find it harder to remember and use learning from one day to the next.</li> <li>• Struggle when activities become more complex, have several steps, or use more language.</li> <li>• Find it difficult to start tasks, stay focused, or organise themselves during play.</li> <li>• Show uneven development, with clear strengths alongside areas of emerging difficulty.</li> <li>• Become less confident, avoid activities they find hard, or give up quickly.</li> <li>• Have learning differences influenced by other factors (e.g. speech and language, attention, emotional regulation or home experiences).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <p>Children continue to learn through play and everyday routines, with additional adjustments, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller steps and clear modelling to reduce cognitive load.</li> <li>• More frequent checking of understanding.</li> <li>• Extra time to explore, practise and complete activities.</li> <li>• Pre-teaching or revisiting key ideas, vocabulary or routines.</li> <li>• Targeted adult support during play to scaffold learning.</li> <li>• Small-group activities linked to identified needs.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Targeted</b>       | <p>Showing ongoing and consistent learning differences then affect how they access play-based learning and everyday routines. They May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make limited or uneven progress over time</li> <li>• Show difficulty acquiring new skills, particularly as learning becomes more complex</li> <li>• Have difficulties with retaining learning from one day to the next</li> <li>• Find it hard to apply learning across different activities, routines or contexts</li> <li>• Experience difficulties with attention, working memory or task initiation that impact learning throughout the day</li> <li>• Show increasing unevenness in development, with gaps becoming more apparent over time</li> <li>• Demonstrate reduced confidence, frustration or avoidance when faced with learning challenges</li> <li>• Have cognition and learning needs that are closely interlinked with other areas of development, such as speech and language, attention, or emotional regulation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support remains play-based but is more structured and intentional.</li> <li>• Regular, planned small-group support focused on identified learning needs.</li> <li>• Adult-led activities broken into very small steps with clear modelling.</li> <li>• Frequent repetition and overlearning to help skills become secure.</li> <li>• Targeted support to develop early thinking and problem-solving, attention, listening and memory and early literacy and/or numeracy skills.</li> <li>• Adults provide consistent scaffolding to help children engage, persist and experience success.</li> <li>• Support is designed to gradually build independence where possible.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Targeted Plus</b>  | <p>Showing significant difficulties that have an increasing impact on access to play-based learning, routines and early curriculum experiences. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make very limited or uneven progress over time</li> <li>• Show significant difficulty acquiring, retaining and applying new learning, particularly basic concepts</li> <li>• Struggle to remember learning from one day to the next</li> <li>• Find it very difficult to generalise skills across different activities, routines or contexts</li> <li>• Experience marked difficulties with attention, working memory, processing or task initiation, affecting learning throughout the day</li> <li>• Require learning to be broken into very small steps to engage and show understanding</li> <li>• Show significantly restricted or repetitive play, with limited progression over time</li> <li>• Demonstrate increased frustration, anxiety, withdrawal or avoidance when learning feels challenging</li> <li>• Rely heavily on adult involvement to initiate, sustain and complete activities</li> <li>• Have cognition and learning needs that are closely interlinked with other areas of development, such as speech and language, attention, sensory processing or emotional regulation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support continues to prioritise skill acquisition and consolidation, with the expectation that some learning will become increasingly secure over time.</li> <li>• More frequent and sustained adult-led support, delivered daily or across multiple sessions</li> <li>• Learning activities are broken into very small, carefully sequenced steps, with repeated modelling</li> <li>• High levels of repetition and overlearning to support retention and consolidation</li> <li>• Regular opportunities to revisit and practise the same concepts across the day and week.</li> <li>• Increased adult scaffolding to support; Attention and engagement, early thinking and problem-solving, memory and processing and early literacy and/or numeracy concepts</li> <li>• Adults actively support children to initiate tasks, stay engaged and experience success</li> <li>• Support is carefully planned to build independence gradually, where possible, while recognising ongoing need</li> </ul> |
| <b>Specialist</b>     | <p>Showing complex and persistent difficulties that have a profound impact on access to play-based learning, routines and early curriculum experiences. These needs are evidenced consistently and over time, they may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make minimal or no measurable progress with learning remaining fragile or easily lost.</li> <li>• Experience severe difficulty acquiring, retaining and applying even basic concepts</li> <li>• Show very limited ability to recall recent learning, even over short periods</li> <li>• Be unable to generalise learning across activities, environments or people</li> <li>• Have significant and persistent difficulties with attention, working memory, processing and executive functioning</li> <li>• Require learning experiences to be reduced to highly individualised, small-step engagement</li> <li>• Show very restricted, repetitive or sensory-driven play, with little spontaneous development</li> <li>• Demonstrate high levels of frustration, distress, withdrawal or disengagement linked to learning demands</li> <li>• Be highly dependent on adult mediation to engage with activities, routines and transitions</li> <li>• Have cognition and learning needs that are deeply interwoven with other areas of development, such as speech and language, sensory processing, physical development or emotional regulation</li> <li>• Present with a learning profile that suggests significant developmental delay affecting everyday functioning within the setting</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning is prioritised around engagement, access and developmental readiness rather than acquisition of age-related skills.</li> <li>• Support is intensive, sustained and ongoing, forming a core part of the child's daily experience</li> <li>• Learning is planned around a very small number of priority developmental outcomes</li> <li>• Activities are broken into tiny, carefully scaffolded steps, often requiring adult-led engagement</li> <li>• Continuous repetition and overlearning are essential to maintain emerging skills</li> <li>• Adults provide a high level of scaffolding to support: Engagement and initiation and understanding, attention and regulation, early communication, thinking and problem-solving.</li> <li>• Learning opportunities focus on engagement, participation and developmental readiness, rather than coverage</li> <li>• Independence is developed slowly and carefully, recognising the child's high level of need</li> </ul>               |

# Communication & Interaction

In the Early Years, communication and interaction describe how young children develop the foundations for understanding, expressing themselves, and engaging with others through play, routines, interaction and everyday experiences. These skills develop gradually and unevenly, supported through warm, responsive adult interaction, repetition, shared attention and meaningful relationships.

Children's communication and interaction profiles vary widely in the Early Years and are shaped by experience, opportunity, environment and individual development. Some children may need additional time, repetition or adult support to develop communication, language and interaction skills, even where activities are well adapted and inclusive.

When considering communication and interaction needs in the Early Years, it is important to take account of a child's overall experiences, including attendance, transitions, relationships and consistency of interaction across settings. Children should have access to a language-rich, communication-friendly EYFS curriculum, with high-quality adult interaction that builds on what they already communicate and understand.

Communication and interaction needs may be broad or more specific and may be temporary or ongoing. Some children may show strengths in certain aspects of communication (e.g. non-verbal interaction, interest-led talk or listening in small groups) while needing additional support with others (e.g. understanding language, using speech clearly, initiating interaction or sustaining play). Progress should be reviewed regularly through observation, assessment and discussion with parents and carers, recognising and valuing small steps of progress.

Some children may show delayed language development due to fewer early language experiences or because they are learning English as an additional language. English as an Additional Language (EAL) on its own is not a special educational need, although children learning EAL may also have additional speech, language, or social communication needs. Careful, reflective consideration is needed to understand the underlying cause of any communication differences.

Effective identification and support are strengthened through close partnership with families and, where appropriate, advice from health professionals. Children's needs may change as they develop, and regular review is essential to ensure support remains appropriate and responsive.

**Children with communication and interaction differences and difficulties may show some or all the following:**

| Understanding & Using Language                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Social Communication & Interaction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Attention, Play & Flexibility                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delay in developing words, phrases, or sentences</li><li>• Difficulty understanding spoken language, especially longer or group instructions</li><li>• Limited use of language to share needs, ideas, or feelings</li><li>• Speech that may be unclear, repetitive, or unusual in rhythm or tone</li><li>• Limited use of gestures, pointing, or facial expression alongside words</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced interest in interacting with adults or other children</li><li>• Difficulty with turn-taking, sharing attention, or responding to others</li><li>• Differences in eye contact, facial expression, or body language</li><li>• Limited pretend play or difficulty joining in with play</li><li>• Preference for playing alone or alongside others rather than with them</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty shifting attention between activities or people</li><li>• Becoming distressed when routines change</li><li>• Strong preferences for specific toys, toys used in a particular way, or familiar routines</li><li>• Repetitive play, movements, or use of language</li></ul> |

| Tier                  | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Universal</b>      | <p>Developing early communication, language and interaction skills broadly in line with their developmental stage. They May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be developing early listening, attention and turn-taking skills.</li> <li>• Use a growing range of sounds, gestures, babble or words to communicate.</li> <li>• Be learning to understand simple language within play and routines.</li> <li>• Engage in interaction with adults and other children, with support.</li> <li>• Need repetition, modelling and time to respond.</li> <li>• Communicate more effectively in familiar contexts than unfamiliar ones.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>High-quality Early Years practice includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm, responsive adult interaction and shared attention</li> <li>• Adults noticing, interpreting and responding to children's verbal and non-verbal communication</li> <li>• Modelling language and interaction through play and routines</li> <li>• Using simple language, repetition and key words</li> <li>• Giving children time to process, respond and communicate in their own way</li> <li>• Supporting communication through everyday play, routines and real-life experiences</li> </ul>                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Universal Plus</b> | <p>Showing communication and interaction differences compared to what would typically be expected for a child's age and stage, beginning to affect access to everyday learning. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more repetition or support to understand everyday language.</li> <li>• Use a more limited range of words, phrases or sounds.</li> <li>• Be difficult to understand outside familiar contexts or with unfamiliar adults.</li> <li>• Prefer communicating with adults rather than peers.</li> <li>• Find it harder to join in or sustain interaction through play.</li> <li>• Show uneven communication development, with strengths and emerging difficulties.</li> <li>• Become less confident or avoid interaction when communication feels difficult.</li> <li>• Have communication differences influenced by other factors (e.g. attention, emotional regulation, sensory needs or home experiences).</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued learning through play and routines, with additional adjustments.</li> <li>• Clear modelling of language and interaction.</li> <li>• Smaller steps and simplified language to reduce communication load.</li> <li>• Frequent checking of understanding through observation, not testing.</li> <li>• Extra time and opportunities to practise communication.</li> <li>• Pre-teaching or revisiting key words, phrases or routines.</li> <li>• Targeted adult support during play to scaffold interaction.</li> <li>• Carefully planned small-group interaction opportunities linked to identified need.</li> </ul>        |
| <b>Targeted</b>       | <p>Showing consistent communication and interaction difficulties that affect participation, learning and relationships. They May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make limited or uneven progress in communication over time.</li> <li>• Have difficulty understanding spoken language beyond familiar routines.</li> <li>• Use speech that is unclear or difficult to understand, even for familiar adults.</li> <li>• Struggle to communicate needs, ideas or emotions effectively.</li> <li>• Find it difficult to initiate, sustain or generalise interaction across contexts.</li> <li>• Become increasingly isolated from peers.</li> <li>• Experience frustration, withdrawal or avoidance linked to communication difficulty.</li> <li>• Have communication needs closely linked with other areas of development (e.g. language, attention, regulation).</li> </ul>                                                                       | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support remains play-based but is more structured and intentional.</li> <li>• Time limited, planned small-group or individual communication support.</li> <li>• Adult-led interaction broken into small, explicit steps.</li> <li>• High levels of repetition and rehearsal to support retention.</li> <li>• Targeted support for listening, attention, understanding and expressive communication.</li> <li>• Consistent adult scaffolding to support engagement and success.</li> <li>• Support planned to build confidence and gradual independence where possible.</li> </ul>                            |
| <b>Targeted Plus</b>  | <p>Showing significant difficulties that have an increasing impact on learning and participation. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make limited progress in understanding or using language.</li> <li>• Struggle to retain or apply communication skills from day to day.</li> <li>• Rely heavily on adult support to communicate or interact.</li> <li>• Avoid communication or use minimal verbal or non-verbal strategies.</li> <li>• Show very limited or repetitive social play.</li> <li>• Experience marked difficulties interpreting social cues.</li> <li>• Demonstrate increased anxiety, frustration or withdrawal linked to communication.</li> <li>• Have communication needs closely interwoven with sensory, attention or regulation needs.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                    | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly structured and intentional communication support.</li> <li>• Regular and frequent adult-led interaction support delivered.</li> <li>• Communication broken into very small, sequenced steps.</li> <li>• High levels of repetition and overlearning.</li> <li>• Planned opportunities to practise communication across routines and play.</li> <li>• Adults actively support initiation, interaction and participation.</li> <li>• Independence supported gradually, recognising ongoing need.</li> </ul>                                                                                                        |
| <b>Specialist</b>     | <p>Showing complex and persistent difficulties that significantly affect every aspect of learning and daily routines. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make minimal or no sustained progress in communication.</li> <li>• Have very limited understanding of spoken or signed language.</li> <li>• Be unable to generalise communication across people or environments.</li> <li>• Depend on adult mediation for communication, interaction and transitions.</li> <li>• Show very restricted or sensory-driven play.</li> <li>• Experience high levels of distress or withdrawal linked to communication demands.</li> <li>• Have communication needs deeply interwoven with other areas of development.</li> <li>• Present with a profile indicating significant developmental impact on everyday functioning.</li> </ul>                                                                                                               | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning remains play-based but is highly individualised and specialist-informed.</li> <li>• Communication support is intensive, sustained and central to daily experience.</li> <li>• Learning focused on a small number of priority communication and interaction outcomes.</li> <li>• Activities broken into tiny, adult-supported steps.</li> <li>• Continuous repetition required to maintain emerging skills.</li> <li>• High levels of scaffolding to support engagement, regulation and understanding.</li> <li>• Independence developed slowly and carefully, recognising complexity of need.</li> </ul> |

# Sensory Needs

In the Early Years, sensory needs describe how young children access, process and respond to sensory information, including sound, visual information, movement and touch, as they explore, play and interact with others. For some children, differences in hearing, vision or the combined impact of both can create barriers to communication, learning, participation and social interaction, particularly within group based and play led environments.

Sensory needs in early childhood may be identified early or may emerge gradually over time, particularly as social, communication and learning demands increase. For some children, sensory differences may be mild or fluctuating, while for others they may have a more significant and pervasive impact on development. The impact of a sensory impairment cannot be understood by diagnosis or clinical measures alone and should always be considered in terms of how the child experiences and accesses everyday activities, routines and relationships.

**Children with sensory needs may experience differences in how they:**

- Attend to and interpret spoken language or environmental sounds
- Notice, track or interpret visual information
- Access and learn from play, routines and interaction
- Develop communication, social interaction and independence
- Manage sensory load, fatigue or emotional regulation

Some children experience combined hearing and vision needs (multi sensory impairment). Even when each impairment is mild, their interaction can significantly reduce access to incidental learning, early communication cues and shared experiences. Multi sensory needs may result in uneven or atypical developmental profiles and often increase the impact of sensory differences on confidence, independence and engagement.

Identification of sensory needs in the Early Years should be needs led, developmental and holistic, drawing on observation over time, professional judgement and parental insight. Needs may overlap with, or contribute to, differences in communication, physical development, attention or emotional regulation and should be understood within the wider context of the child's development and experiences. The Sensory descriptors within this Framework describe increasing levels of impact on access, participation and development, rather than diagnoses or interventions. They support early years practitioners to recognise when sensory differences are affecting a child's experience and to identify the most appropriate tier within a graduated, cumulative response.

## Hearing Impairment

Any Early Years child with a medically diagnosed hearing impairment\* will be known to the HI Service. The child will have a medical diagnosis of deafness at mild, moderate, severe or profound level in one or both ears. The deafness could be Sensorineural or Conductive or fluctuating in nature.

Their needs will have been holistically assessed using the NatSIP framework for Preschool children by their family, QToD and their setting. This assessment will be revised at least annually or after any major change in their needs.

*\* Hearing Impairment is the language used around deafness within the SEND CoP and Equalities Act 2010 and is therefore used within this document. Hearing impairment can also be known as deafness, or hearing loss, or being hard of hearing, and families should be asked for their preferred language around their child's needs.*

The term 'deaf' includes all levels of deafness, from mild to profound. Deaf children are defined as all children with sensorineural and permanent conductive deafness, using the descriptors provided by the British Society of Audiology. In addition, children with enduring temporary deafness as defined in the NICE 2023 Recommendations information-and-advice OME are included in the term deaf, as their needs can fall within the EA 2010 defined term of a disability. (<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng233/chapter/Recommendations#information-and-advice>)

## Vision Impairment

An Early Years child with a diagnosed or emerging vision impairment may experience differences in how they access visual information, explore their environment, engage in play and develop early independence. Vision impairment can include reduced visual acuity, field loss, cerebral visual impairment, fluctuating visual access or other functional visual difficulties. The impact of a vision impairment should always be understood in relation to the child's developmental stage, everyday routines, confidence, interaction and access to learning, rather than by clinical measures alone.

Some children may already be known to health professionals or the Local Authority Vision Impairment Service, while others may be identified through observation in the setting or through parental concerns. Practitioners should consider how the child uses vision across familiar and unfamiliar contexts, including play, group times, transitions, outdoor learning, self-care routines and social interaction. Where a child appears to have difficulty noticing, tracking, locating or interpreting visual information, advice should be sought in partnership with parents and carers.

Support for children with vision impairment in the Early Years should focus on maximising access, participation and emerging independence through inclusive environments, clear routines, meaningful multi-sensory experiences and specialist advice where required. Families should be asked how they describe their child's needs and what helps their child at home and in the community, so that support is consistent, respectful and responsive.



## Multi-Sensory Impairment

Multi-sensory impairment describes the combined impact of hearing and vision needs. In the Early Years, even mild difficulties in both senses can significantly affect how a child accesses communication, incidental learning, play, movement, relationships and early independence. The interaction between hearing and vision needs can create barriers that are greater than either need considered separately, particularly in busy, noisy or visually complex environments.

Children with multi-sensory impairment may miss or receive reduced access to the visual and auditory cues that support early communication, shared attention, imitation, movement, safety awareness and social connection. Needs may present through slower or uneven development, increased fatigue, reduced confidence in unfamiliar spaces, difficulty following group routines, or greater reliance on familiar adults to interpret the environment and support communication.

Assessment and planning should be holistic, functional and informed by the child's family, setting and relevant specialist professionals. Support should not treat hearing and vision needs separately but should consider how the combined sensory profile affects access across the whole day. Effective Early Years provision will use predictable routines, reduced sensory load, clear multi-modal communication, meaningful objects and experiences, and carefully planned support to promote confidence, participation and independence.

| Tier                    | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Service Involvement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <p><b>Universal</b></p> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child has typical vision or a very mild visual difficulty which does not significantly impact access to learning within familiar Early Years environments.</li> <li>Any visual difference has minimal functional impact on participation, interaction or independence.</li> <li>The child is making expected progress in language, learning and across all EYFS developmental areas in the context of all their SEND needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child's holistic needs would fall in the NatSIP Eligibility framework level C3 guiding QToD support at 'advice only' or an annual visit.</li> <li>A hearing aid/s may be prescribed if indicated by Audiology with joint decision making with carers.</li> <li>The child is making expected or better than expected language progress and progress across other EYFS development areas in context of all their SEND needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing and Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child has a confirmed or emerging difficulty with hearing and vision, with minimal combined functional impact within familiar Early Years routines.</li> <li>The child can participate in play, interaction and learning with typical levels of confidence and independence for their developmental stage.</li> <li>The child is making expected progress across the EYFS developmental areas in the context of all their SEND needs.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following identification or diagnosis, advice may be offered by the Local Authority Vision Impairment Service on request.</li> <li>One off consultation or guidance may be provided to support the family or setting.</li> <li>The child does not usually require placement on the active QTVI caseload.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following an initial assessment by a QToD and the provision of written advice, the child does not require active involvement or assessment by the HI Service. The child's needs can be met by the inclusive universal offer of the setting.</li> <li>The child will remain on the HI Service caseload at an 'on advice' level or 'Annual' support level to allow contact from the family, educational setting, health professionals, SEND Assessment and/or social care queries.</li> <li>There will be ongoing assessment by NHS Audiology, or Ear, nose and throat professionals shared with the HI Service.</li> </ul> | <p>High-quality Early Years practice includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All key people understand the importance of inclusive, accessible Early Years environments in line with Ordinarily Available Provision.</li> <li>Quality First Teaching supports access to learning, participation and interaction.</li> <li>The learning and social environment is accessible and inclusive.</li> <li>The child's progress is monitored through universal assessment and review processes.</li> <li>Families are provided with clear information and universal guidance and are involved in decision making.</li> </ul> <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners are aware that the child has a vision impairment and understand the potential impact on access to learning, interaction and independence.</li> <li>Everyday practice supports access to learning through inclusive presentation of activities and materials within familiar routines.</li> <li>The child's learning and social participation are supported through inclusive Early Years practice.</li> <li>Universal observation and assessment processes take account of how the child uses their vision in play and learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners are aware that the child has a hearing impairment and understand the potential impact on listening, interaction and access to learning.</li> <li>Everyday practice supports access to spoken and/or signed communication within familiar Early Years routines.</li> <li>The child's learning and social participation are supported through inclusive Early Years practice.</li> <li>Universal observation and assessment processes take account of the child's listening, communication and engagement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing and Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusive practice reflects awareness that the child may access information less reliably through either distance sense (hearing/vision), so adults routinely support understanding using clear, consistent routines and multi modal communication.</li> <li>Observations consider how the child accesses communication and the environment through hearing and vision in everyday play.</li> </ul> |

| Tier                         | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Service Involvement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <p><b>Universal Plus</b></p> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child has a mild vision impairment, including mild acuity reduction, mild field loss, early CVI indicators or functional visual difficulties.</li> <li>The visual difficulty has some impact on access to learning, particularly in less familiar situations.</li> <li>The child is making broadly expected progress when consistent adjustments are in place.</li> <li>The child's needs reflect a low-level functional visual impact.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Hearing aid/s may be prescribed if indicated by Audiology in joint decision making with carers.</li> <li>The child's needs would fall in the NatSIP Eligibility framework level C1 or C2. A QToD supports two or three times per year.</li> <li>The child is making expected progress in language and across other EYFS development areas in context of all their SEND needs and availability of fluent language users around them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Multi-Sensory:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child has mild combined hearing, and vision needs which create a low level but noticeable functional impact on access to communication, play and learning.</li> <li>The child may find busy, unfamiliar or less predictable situations more difficult due to reduced access to auditory and visual information.</li> <li>The child is making broadly expected progress, but this relies on consistent access considerations.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following an initial assessment by a QTVI and the provision of written advice, the child is typically seen once or twice per year.</li> <li>Ongoing liaison with eye care professionals may occur and be shared with the setting and family.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following an initial assessment by a QToD and the provision of written advice, the deaf child will be seen two or three times per year by a QToD. The child may or may not wear personal hearing aids.</li> <li>The support level will allow contact between family, educational setting, health professionals, SEND Assessment and/or social care queries.</li> <li>There will be ongoing assessment by NHS Audiology, or Ear, Nose and Throat professionals, shared with the HI Service and setting.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners identify and understand the child's visual needs based on initial advice.</li> <li>Environmental adaptations are applied consistently within familiar routines.</li> <li>Strategies are shared with relevant staff and considered during transitions within settings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners can identify and understand the specific and holistic needs and rights of the child based on initial information and advice shared by the HI Service.</li> <li>Written advice from the HI Service is shared with relevant staff and utilised in day-to-day practice.</li> <li>Strategies reflect those within Ordinarily Available Provision and Deaf-Friendly approaches and are applied consistently within familiar routines.</li> <li>Families are supported to develop confidence and understanding through joint working with the HI Service and health professionals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Multi-Sensory:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults consistently use multi-modal communication (spoken language supported by visual/gesture/object cues) to reduce reliance on one sensory channel.</li> <li>The environment is reviewed for combined impact factors (e.g. background noise and visual complexity) to support attention and engagement.</li> <li>Key strategies are shared and revisited at transition points within Early Years.</li> </ul> |

| Tier     | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Service Involvement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| Targeted | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a mild to moderate vision impairment which impacts access to learning, interaction and emerging independence.</li> <li>Visual difficulties affect participation beyond familiar routines, environments or predictable activities.</li> <li>Without targeted adjustments, the child is at risk of reduced progress.</li> <li>The child's needs align with NatSIP C1 level functional impact.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Hearing aid/s are likely to be prescribed by Audiology in joint decision making with carers.</li> <li>The child's needs would fall in the NatSIP Eligibility framework level B2. A QToD supports up to six times per year.</li> <li>Likely to wear personal hearing equipment provided by the NHS (hearing aids, bone conduction devices etc.)</li> <li>Making less than expected progress in one or two EYFS development areas when considered in context of all their SEND needs and availability of fluent language users around them.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child is on the active caseload of the Local Authority Vision Impairment Service.</li> <li>Following assessment, a QTVI provides advice, strategies and review, typically through two or three visits per year.</li> <li>Assessment information supports liaison between family, Early Years provision and relevant professionals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following an initial assessment by a QToD and the provision of written advice and setting training, the deaf child will be supported up to six times per year by a QToD.</li> <li>QToD listening assessment around the need for additional technology may result in use of an ALD.</li> <li>There will be ongoing assessment by NHS Audiology, or Ear, nose and throat professionals, sometimes alongside the ToD.</li> <li>The HI Service provides an intervention from at least one area SDCF per year.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners implement bespoke, child-specific strategies informed by QTVI advice.</li> <li>Adaptations are embedded across all areas of provision, including less predictable activities.</li> <li>Support focuses on developing the child's confidence, functional visual skills and emerging independence.</li> <li>Progress is monitored jointly with the Vision Impairment Service.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners implement bespoke, child-specific Deaf-Friendly strategies informed by HI Service advice.</li> <li>Written advice is reviewed and updated as appropriate and cascaded to staff year-by-year, including at points of transition.</li> <li>The child's learning and social environments are adapted across a wider range of activities, including less predictable or group-based contexts.</li> <li>Targeted support focuses on developing the child's confidence, independence and access to spoken and/or signed communication.</li> <li>Progress is monitored in conjunction with the HI Service.</li> </ul> <p><b>Multi-Sensory:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners implement bespoke, child specific strategies that explicitly address the combined impact of hearing and vision needs (not treated separately).</li> <li>Access planning considers both learning and social situations (e.g. ensuring the child can follow interaction without relying solely on distance hearing or distance vision).</li> <li>Targeted support focuses on building confidence, participation and early independence as a learner with MSI.</li> </ul> |
|          | <p><b>Multi-Sensory:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has mild to moderate combined sensory needs that have a clear functional impact on access to learning, interaction and emerging independence.</li> <li>Difficulty accessing communication and play across a wider range of contexts (e.g. group times, outdoor learning, unfamiliar adults/spaces).</li> <li>May experience reduced progress, increased fatigue, or social withdrawal</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

| Tier          | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Service Involvement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| Targeted Plus | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child has a moderate to severe vision impairment, including significant acuity reduction, field loss or CVI.</li> <li>The vision impairment has a substantial impact on access, independence and participation across the EYFS.</li> <li>The child experiences ongoing difficulty engaging without high levels of adaptation.</li> <li>Needs align with NatSIP C2 level functional impact.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Hearing aid/s or cochlear implant are likely to be used by the child to access speech or environmental sound.</li> <li>Child may also use an ALD if their listening access in their learning environment is challenging.</li> <li>The child's needs would fall in the NatSIP Eligibility framework level B1 or A3. A QToD supports between 10 – 19 hours per year.</li> <li>The child is making less than expected progress across multiple EYFS development areas.</li> <li>The child's communication and language progress could be significantly less than expected, when considered in context of all their SEND needs and availability of fluent language users around them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Multi-Sensory:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child has moderate to severe combined sensory needs with a substantial impact on access to communication, learning, mobility awareness and self help skills.</li> <li>Experiences persistent difficulty engaging and maintaining independence across the Early Years Day due to reduced dual sensory access.</li> <li>Is at increased risk of isolation, anxiety or reduced self directed engagement due to barriers in both hearing and vision.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child receives regular input from a QTVI, typically termly or more frequently following assessment.</li> <li>Joint working with health and therapy professionals may be required.</li> <li>A Qualified Habilitation Specialist may contribute assessment relating to early mobility, orientation or independence.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following an initial assessment by a QToD, the provision of written advice and setting training, the deaf child will have monthly or fortnightly support by a QToD.</li> <li>The child will almost certainly wear personal hearing equipment provided by the NHS (hearing aids; Bone conduction devices; cochlear implant etc).</li> <li>The child may need a block of time limited work with an HI Specialist Support Assistant to build skills in targeted criteria of the NatSIP framework (e.g. building equipment success; a communication or language boost; or developing social inclusion skills).</li> <li>There will be ongoing shared assessment by NHS Audiology, or Ear, nose and throat professionals alongside the HI Service ToDs.</li> <li>HI Service liaison with multi-agency colleagues remains short-term or targeted, aligned to specific needs.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EY environment is highly structured, predictable and intentionally organised to reduce visual demand.</li> <li>Specialist resources and modified materials are embedded throughout the child's daily routines.</li> <li>Support explicitly targets orientation, self-help skills and early independent functioning.</li> <li>Families receive ongoing, structured guidance to ensure consistency across home and setting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practitioners require more frequent and targeted input from the HI Service to refine strategies and ensure access to learning and assessment activities.</li> <li>The HI Service provides time-limited advice and guidance, informed by NatSIP assessment, to support accessibility of both learning and social environments.</li> <li>Families may require additional, time-limited guidance to ensure consistency across home and Early Years settings.</li> <li>Specialist intervention relating to assistive listening or technology beyond personal aids, as identified through HI Service assessment.</li> <li>May need additional support from the HI Service to ensure successful transitions between settings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Multi-Sensory:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The environment is highly structured, predictable and intentionally organised to reduce combined sensory load (auditory + visual).</li> <li>Adults use explicit teaching and rehearsal of routines, transitions and safety related expectations to support orientation and independence.</li> <li>Adaptations are embedded across the full day, including less predictable contexts (outdoors, mealtimes, group play), with increased precision and consistency.</li> </ul> |

| Tier       | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Service Involvement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| Specialist | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child has a severe or profound vision impairment, including children who are educationally blind or have complex visual needs.</li> <li>The impact of vision impairment is significant and pervasive across learning, communication, mobility and independence.</li> <li>The child is unable to access the EYFS without intensive adaptation and specialist expertise.</li> <li>Needs align with NatSIP C3 / D level functional impact.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Hearing aid/s or cochlear implant are likely to be used by the child to access speech or environmental sound.</li> <li>Child may also use an ALD if their listening access in their learning environment is challenging.</li> <li>The child's needs would fall in the NatSIP Eligibility framework level A2 or A1. A QToD supports weekly or multi-weekly during term time.</li> <li>The child is making significantly less than expected progress across EYFS development areas.</li> <li>The child's communication and language progress is significantly less than expected, when considered in context of all their SEND needs and availability of fluent language users around them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Multi-Sensory:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has severe/profound MSI with pervasive impact on communication, access to learning, mobility/orientation and independence across the EYFS.</li> <li>Unable to access the Early Years environment reliably without intensive adaptation and specialist expertise.</li> <li>Developmental progress and wellbeing are significantly affected by the combined barriers in both hearing and vision.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child receives high frequency support from the Local Authority Vision Impairment Service.</li> <li>A QTVI provides regular assessment, direct teaching and review.</li> <li>A structured habilitation programme may be in place, led by a Qualified Habilitation Specialist.</li> <li>The VI Service works closely with education, health and social care professionals.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following an initial assessment by a QToD, the provision of written advice and setting training, the deaf child will have weekly or multi-weekly support by a QToD.</li> <li>The child will almost certainly wear personal hearing equipment provided by the NHS (hearing aids, Bone conduction devices, cochlear implant etc).</li> <li>The child may need on-going support from an HI Specialist Support Assistant/CSW to support access to education (for example with BSL or SSE) and/or build skills in targeted criteria of the NatSIP framework (e.g. Building equipment success; a language boost; or social inclusion activities).</li> <li>There will be ongoing shared assessment by NHS Audiology, or Ear, nose and throat professionals alongside the HI Service ToDs.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Vision:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EY environment is highly structured, predictable and intentionally organised to reduce visual demand.</li> <li>Specialist resources and modified materials are embedded throughout the child's daily routines.</li> <li>Support explicitly targets orientation, self-help skills and early independent functioning.</li> <li>Families receive ongoing, structured guidance to ensure consistency across home and setting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child accesses an individualised curriculum shaped by specialist assessment.</li> <li>Learning is supported through planned, multi-sensory approaches matched to the child's profile.</li> <li>Adults working with the child demonstrate advanced skills and training in vision impairment.</li> <li>Planning prioritises independence, confidence and preparation for future transitions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hearing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child's learning is supported through highly individualised Deaf Friendly approaches, refined in response to ongoing assessment.</li> <li>Strategies are reviewed regularly to reflect changes in auditory access, communication needs and developmental profile.</li> <li>Adults supporting the child demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills in supporting deaf children, including communication and access strategies.</li> <li>Learning environments are intentionally organised to always maximise auditory and visual access.</li> <li>Planning prioritises independence, confidence and preparation for future transitions, including transition to school.</li> </ul> |
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## Physical & Medical

In the Early Years, physical and medical needs describe how young children access, explore and participate in play, learning, routines and everyday experiences when they have a disability, medical condition, long-term illness, physical impairment or developmental difference affecting their physical development, health or wellbeing. These needs can vary considerably in presentation and impact. Some children may require only minor adjustments within the learning environment, while others may need carefully planned support, specialist advice, equipment, or adaptations throughout the day to enable full participation. This aligns with the Early Years focus on physical development as one of the prime areas of learning and development.

Physical and medical needs do not automatically limit a child's learning potential or cognitive development. Children may be working above, at or below typical developmental expectations depending on their individual strengths, experiences, health needs and the extent to which their physical or medical needs affect participation, stamina, communication, exploration and access to learning opportunities.

When considering physical and medical needs in the Early Years, it is important to take account of the child's overall development, health history, attendance, routines, family experiences and opportunities for play and exploration. Children should have access to a safe, inclusive and enabling environment, with high-quality adult interactions and responsive support that promotes independence, participation and confidence wherever possible. This may include considering the impact of medication, treatment programmes, hospital appointments, fatigue, mobility, feeding or personal care needs on the child's daily experiences and development.

Physical and medical needs may be temporary or ongoing and may change over time as children grow and develop. Progress should be reviewed regularly through observation, assessment and discussion with parents, carers and relevant professionals. Particular attention should be given to the child's ability to access play, movement, self-care routines, social interaction and learning opportunities alongside their peers.

Children with physical and medical needs may experience differences in:

- Mobility, movement and physical access to the environment
- Stamina, fatigue and energy levels throughout the day
- Participation in play, exploration and physical activities
- Self-care skills, including dressing, toileting, feeding and personal care
- Attendance and engagement in routines and learning experiences
- Communication, confidence and social participation
- Safety awareness, risk management and independence
- Fine and gross motor development

Effective identification and support are strengthened through close partnership with families and, where appropriate, advice from health professionals and specialist services. Children's needs may change over time, and regular review is essential to ensure support remains appropriate, responsive and focused on promoting participation, wellbeing, independence and positive developmental outcomes.



| Tier                  | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <b>Universal</b>      | <p>Developing physical skills, movement, independence and participation broadly in line with their developmental stage. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be developing gross and fine motor skills through play, exploration and everyday routines.</li> <li>• Move safely and confidently around familiar indoor and outdoor environments.</li> <li>• Develop increasing independence in self-care activities such as dressing, toileting and feeding.</li> <li>• Participate fully in physical play and learning experiences with peers.</li> <li>• Show typical variations in stamina, coordination and physical confidence.</li> <li>• Need encouragement, practice and adult modelling when learning new physical skills.</li> <li>• Recover quickly from physical activity and engage consistently throughout the day.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                              | <p>High-quality Early Years practice includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing varied opportunities to develop movement, coordination, strength and independence through play.</li> <li>• Encouraging participation in both indoor and outdoor physical experiences.</li> <li>• Supporting increasing independence within everyday self-care routines.</li> <li>• Adapting expectations according to developmental stage and individual readiness.</li> <li>• Promoting confidence through praise, encouragement and opportunities for success.</li> <li>• Building physical skills naturally through play, exploration and everyday experiences.</li> </ul>                                                                                                             |
| <b>Universal Plus</b> | <p>Showing emerging physical, motor or medical differences compared to what would typically be expected for a child's age and stage, beginning to affect participation in some activities. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appear less confident or less coordinated than their peers in some physical activities.</li> <li>• Tire more easily than expected during active play or daily routines.</li> <li>• Need additional support to participate in some physical, fine motor or self-care activities.</li> <li>• Avoid certain activities due to physical effort, discomfort or reduced confidence.</li> <li>• Show uneven development across different areas of physical development.</li> <li>• Require occasional adjustments to routines or activities to support participation.</li> <li>• Experience periods of absence or reduced participation linked to health needs.</li> <li>• Show emerging difficulties managing personal care or independence skills.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical skills are broken into smaller achievable steps during play and routines.</li> <li>• Opportunities are provided to practise emerging physical and independence skills.</li> <li>• Adults provide increased modelling, encouragement and reassurance where confidence is affected.</li> <li>• Play opportunities are adapted to enable successful participation alongside peers.</li> <li>• Activities are paced appropriately to account for variations in stamina and endurance.</li> <li>• Children are supported to develop increasing independence rather than reliance on adult assistance.</li> <li>• Additional supervision is provided where required to enable safe participation.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Targeted</b>       | <p>Showing consistent physical, motor or medical difficulties that affect participation, learning and independence. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience ongoing difficulties with balance, coordination, mobility or physical control.</li> <li>• Find fine motor tasks significantly more challenging than peers.</li> <li>• Need regular support to access activities that most children of a similar age manage independently.</li> <li>• Show persistent difficulties with self-care routines.</li> <li>• Experience fatigue, discomfort or physical challenges that affect engagement throughout the day.</li> <li>• Require regular adaptation of activities to ensure successful participation.</li> <li>• Demonstrate increasing frustration or reduced confidence related to physical difficulties.</li> <li>• Have physical or medical needs that impact development across multiple areas of learning.</li> </ul>                                                 | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical and independence skills are explicitly taught, practised and reinforced throughout the day.</li> <li>• Activities are carefully sequenced to develop specific physical skills in manageable steps.</li> <li>• Additional adult support is provided at identified points of challenge.</li> <li>• Frequent opportunities are planned to rehearse and consolidate developing skills.</li> <li>• Adults consistently scaffold participation whilst encouraging increasing independence.</li> <li>• Learning opportunities are adapted to reduce barriers created by physical or health needs.</li> </ul>                                                                             |
| <b>Targeted Plus</b>  | <p>Showing significant physical, motor or medical difficulties that have an increasing impact on everyday participation and development. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make limited progress in physical development despite sustained support.</li> <li>• Depend on adult assistance for many aspects of mobility, self-care or participation.</li> <li>• Be unable to access some activities without substantial adaptation or support.</li> <li>• Require frequent assistance to move safely around the environment.</li> <li>• Show reduced confidence, resilience or willingness to engage in physical activities.</li> <li>• Experience physical needs that significantly affect independence and participation across routines.</li> <li>• Have multiple interacting physical, developmental or medical needs.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                  | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support is highly structured and consistently delivered across the day.</li> <li>• Physical, mobility and independence goals are embedded into everyday routines and play.</li> <li>• Activities are broken into very small achievable steps with frequent opportunities for success.</li> <li>• Adults provide regular physical prompting, support or supervision where required.</li> <li>• Participation is actively facilitated to ensure inclusion alongside peers.</li> <li>• Increased repetition and practice are provided to maintain and generalise developing skills.</li> <li>• Independence is promoted wherever possible whilst recognising ongoing support needs.</li> </ul>          |
| <b>Specialist</b>     | <p>Showing complex, persistent and significant physical and/or medical needs that affect all aspects of daily participation and development. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have severe difficulties with mobility, physical access or physical development.</li> <li>• Require extensive adult support to participate in learning, play and daily routines.</li> <li>• Be highly dependent on adults for personal care, physical access or health management.</li> <li>• Experience significant fatigue, discomfort or health-related challenges throughout the day.</li> <li>• Need continuous support to maintain safety and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Be unable to generalise physical, independence or self-care skills across different situations.</li> <li>• Have physical and medical needs that substantially affect participation, learning and development.</li> <li>• Present with a profile indicating significant long-term impact on everyday functioning.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access, participation, comfort, wellbeing and independence form central priorities throughout the day.</li> <li>• Activities are adapted extensively to enable meaningful engagement.</li> <li>• Physical, mobility and self-care learning is embedded across all appropriate routines.</li> <li>• Adults provide intensive, sustained support to enable participation and inclusion.</li> <li>• Learning focuses on a small number of priority outcomes linked to participation, independence and quality of life.</li> <li>• Independence is developed carefully over time, recognising the complexity and persistence of need.</li> </ul>                                                    |



## Sensory Processing Differences

Sensory processing differences describe how young children receive, notice, organise and respond to sensory information from their environment and their own bodies. This includes responses to sound, light, touch, movement, body awareness, taste, smell and internal sensations such as hunger or arousal levels. In the Early Years, these differences may be seen through heightened sensitivity, reduced responsiveness or sensory-seeking behaviours.

For young children, sensory processing differences can influence how they engage with play, learning and daily routines. Some children may find busy or unpredictable environments overwhelming, while others may seek out movement, touch or sound to help them feel regulated. These differences can affect attention, emotional regulation, motor coordination, transitions between activities and the child's ability to feel safe and settled within the setting.

Sensory processing differences are often developmental, context-dependent and changeable, particularly in the early years. A child's responses may vary across environments, times of day or activities, and may be influenced by fatigue, emotional wellbeing and familiarity with routines and adults. A strengths-based approach recognises sensory differences as part of a child's individual developmental profile and supports practitioners to build on what helps the child feel calm, engaged and ready to learn.

All Early Years practitioners have a role in supporting children with sensory processing differences through responsive, inclusive practice. This includes shaping routines, environments, teaching approaches and interactions to promote regulation, engagement and growing independence. When sensory needs are understood and supported effectively, children are more able to participate confidently in play, learning and social experiences, laying strong foundations for future development.

| Tier                  | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Universal</b>      | Shows sensory preferences that are consistent with typical early development. They may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show preferences for certain textures, sounds, movements or activities without this restricting participation.</li> <li>Experience brief discomfort in noisy, busy or crowded environments but recover quickly.</li> <li>Demonstrate typical posture, balance and motor planning for their developmental stage.</li> <li>Regulate sensory responses independently within familiar routines and environments.</li> <li>Participate fully in play, routines and social interaction.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                               | High-quality Early Years support sensory development through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning experiences are balanced to include calm, active and sensory-rich play across the day.</li> <li>Flexible responses to sensory preferences within routines and play.</li> <li>Opportunities for movement, exploration and sensory discovery are naturally embedded in play-based learning.</li> <li>Predictable routines and familiar adults support children to feel safe, settled and ready to engage.</li> <li>Support to explore sensory experiences at their own pace, without pressure to avoid or persist beyond comfort.</li> </ul>                                                                                         |
| <b>Universal Plus</b> | Shows emerging sensory processing differences that are beginning to affect learning or participation in some contexts. They may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Display intermittent sensory seeking or sensory avoidant behaviours.</li> <li>Find transitions or changes to the environment more challenging.</li> <li>Need more frequent movement opportunities to maintain regulation.</li> <li>Show emotional responses (e.g. anxiety, distress) in noisy or visually busy environments.</li> <li>Require reminders or simple strategies to return to a regulated state.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>In addition to Universal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning experiences are planned with explicit consideration of the child's sensory preferences and triggers.</li> <li>Children are prepared in advance for changes to routines, environments or activities.</li> <li>Opportunities for movement, calming input or pressure are planned into the day at known points.</li> <li>Adults prompt and model simple regulation strategies to support engagement before difficulties escalate.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Targeted</b>       | The child experiences ongoing sensory processing differences that have a clear impact on their engagement with learning and play. They may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show frequent or intense sensory responses that disrupt concentration or participation.</li> <li>Experience difficulty with self regulation, appearing anxious, withdrawn or overly active.</li> <li>Be sensitive to background noise, visual clutter or unexpected sensory input.</li> <li>Avoid certain tactile experiences (e.g. messy play) or seek frequent movement.</li> <li>Show motor planning or postural difficulties that affect sustained participation, especially during group activities.</li> <li>Become overwhelmed more easily and need time to recover.</li> </ul> | <b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensory regulation opportunities are embedded proactively rather than introduced reactively.</li> <li>Activities, expectations and environments are deliberately shaped around the child's sensory profile.</li> <li>Adults support the child to recognise early signs of dysregulation and seek support before becoming overwhelmed.</li> <li>Learning experiences are adjusted to reduce sensory load while preserving meaningful engagement and participation.</li> <li>Re engagement with learning after dysregulation is actively supported and rehearsed.</li> </ul>                                                                           |
| <b>Targeted Plus</b>  | The child has significant sensory processing differences that consistently affect access, independence and wellbeing. They may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience persistent difficulties maintaining a regulated state.</li> <li>Show strong sensory aversion or heightened sensitivity to sound, touch, movement, light or smell.</li> <li>Require frequent opportunities for movement or calming input to function.</li> <li>Show marked motor planning, balance or postural challenges that impact independence.</li> <li>Avoid or be unable to tolerate certain activities without distress.</li> <li>Experience increased anxiety or withdrawal linked to sensory demands.</li> </ul>                                                               | <b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sensory regulation is an essential foundation for access to learning, not an additional strategy.</li> <li>Activities and transitions are carefully sequenced to manage cumulative sensory demand across the day.</li> <li>Adults provide continuous and proactive co regulation, with learning expectations introduced only when the child is regulated.</li> <li>Exposure to increased sensory demand is introduced gradually, deliberately and at a pace the child can sustain.</li> <li>Consistency across adults, spaces and routines becomes critical to maintaining regulation and participation.</li> </ul>                                            |
| <b>Specialist</b>     | The child has complex and persistent sensory processing differences that have a profound impact on daily functioning. They may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience extreme sensory sensitivities that dominate everyday experience.</li> <li>Require highly controlled, predictable environments to feel safe and settled.</li> <li>Show frequent and prolonged periods of dysregulation, distress or shutdown.</li> <li>Be unable to engage in learning or play without continuous adult support.</li> <li>Have severe motor planning, postural or coordination difficulties affecting independence and self care.</li> <li>Show strong sensory based avoidance around food, touch, movement or sound.</li> </ul>                                         | <b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning is structured around a small number of sensory safe, meaningful experiences.</li> <li>Regulation opportunities are continuously available and embedded across the entire day.</li> <li>Engagement with learning is scaffolded through sustained, adult led support matched moment by moment to the child's sensory and emotional state.</li> <li>Expectations flex dynamically in response to regulation and readiness, prioritising wellbeing over task completion.</li> <li>Progress is understood primarily through increased regulation, participation, emotional security and sustained engagement, alongside learning outcomes.</li> </ul> |

# Social, Emotional & Mental Health

In the Early Years, social, emotional and mental health development describes how young children learn to understand themselves, manage emotions, form relationships and engage with others within play, routines and everyday experiences. These skills develop gradually and unevenly and are strongly influenced by relationships, environment, experience and emotional safety.

All behaviour in the Early Years should be understood as a form of communication. Children may express emotional needs through their actions, particularly when they do not yet have the language, regulation or confidence to express feelings verbally. Some children may need additional adult support to feel safe, regulated and able to engage with learning and social experiences, even where routines and expectations are clear and inclusive.

When considering SEMH needs in the Early Years, it is important to take account of a child's overall experiences, including attachment relationships, transitions, attendance, consistency between home and setting, and any experiences of stress or change. Children should experience a nurturing, predictable EYFS environment, with warm, responsive adults who support emotional development alongside learning.

SEMH needs may be temporary or ongoing and may fluctuate over time and across contexts. Some children may show strengths in certain areas of social or emotional development while experiencing significant difficulty in others. Progress should be reviewed regularly through observation, reflection and discussion with parents and carers, recognising small steps of progress.



| Tier      | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Universal | <p>Developing social and emotional skills broadly in line with typical early childhood development. They May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show age-appropriate emotional responses to change, challenge or frustration.</li> <li>• Be learning to recognise and express feelings.</li> <li>• Be developing early relationships with adults and other children.</li> <li>• Be learning to share, take turns and manage simple boundaries.</li> <li>• Experience occasional emotional upset that resolves within typical expectations.</li> <li>• Be learning to follow familiar routines and expectations.</li> </ul> | <p>High-quality Early Years practice includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults build secure, trusting relationships through consistent, warm interaction.</li> <li>• Adults are mindful of tone, pace and language use to support emotional safety and regulation.</li> <li>• Emotions are named, validated and modelled through everyday routines, stories and play.</li> <li>• Co-regulation is used naturally to support calming and emotional understanding.</li> <li>• Expectations are clear, consistent and positively reinforced.</li> <li>• Opportunities for turn-taking, cooperation and shared play are embedded.</li> <li>• Adults notice and reinforce emerging social and emotional skills, focusing on effort, progress and positive engagement.</li> </ul> |

| Tier                  | Descriptors of Need                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Supporting Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <b>Universal Plus</b> | <p>Showing emerging or more frequent emotional or behavioural responses that affect participation in routines or play. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience heightened emotional responses compared to peers of a similar age and stage</li> <li>• Find transitions, change or unfamiliar situations more challenging</li> <li>• Show difficulty managing emotions within group contexts</li> <li>• Struggle to initiate or sustain positive interaction with peers</li> <li>• Take longer than expected to recover from emotional upset</li> <li>• Show early signs of anxiety, avoidance or emotional insecurity</li> <li>• Present with uneven social and emotional development, with strengths alongside emerging challenges</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults provide more intentional emotional modelling and reflection during play e.g., emotional check-ins.</li> <li>• Emotional responses are explored through structured play, stories and discussion.</li> <li>• Social situations are scaffolded to support successful interaction.</li> <li>• Support is provided during routines or play to scaffold interaction and regulation.</li> <li>• Transitions and less structured parts of the day are supported through increased preparation, modelling and clear expectations.</li> <li>• Adults are attentive to children's emotional readiness for learning and adapt language, pace and expectations to reduce emotional and cognitive load.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Targeted</b>       | <p>Showing ongoing and consistent social or emotional difficulties that affect engagement with learning, routines or relationships. They May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience frequent difficulty regulating emotions across the day</li> <li>• Show persistent anxiety, distress or emotional reactivity</li> <li>• Struggle to form, maintain or repair peer relationships</li> <li>• Have difficulty tolerating everyday demands or frustration</li> <li>• Withdraw from play or social interaction, or show inconsistent engagement</li> <li>• Demonstrate behaviours that regularly impact their own or others' participation</li> <li>• Take a prolonged period to return to a regulated state following emotional upset</li> <li>• Have SEMH needs that are closely linked with other developmental differences (e.g. communication, attention, sensory processing)</li> </ul>                                            | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support is planned, structured and purposeful, linked to identified emotional needs.</li> <li>• Adults explicitly model and teach emotional understanding and regulation strategies through play, routines and guided interaction.</li> <li>• Children are supported to notice early signs of dysregulation.</li> <li>• Social interaction is scaffolded through structured play opportunities.</li> <li>• Expectations are adapted to reduce emotional threat while maintaining inclusion.</li> <li>• Support aims to gradually increase emotional resilience and independence.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Targeted Plus</b>  | <p>Showing significant difficulties that have an increasing impact on learning and participation. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience frequent and intense emotional dysregulation.</li> <li>• Show heightened or pervasive anxiety, distress or withdrawal.</li> <li>• Have significant difficulty sustaining social interaction or relationships.</li> <li>• Show strong avoidance of situations perceived as demanding or unpredictable.</li> <li>• Demonstrate rigid, inflexible or repetitive behavioural responses.</li> <li>• Have limited emotional availability for learning and play.</li> <li>• Struggle to tolerate group environments or everyday expectations.</li> <li>• Present with SEMH needs that are closely interwoven with trauma, attachment, communication or sensory differences.</li> </ul>                                                                                                      | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult support prioritises emotional safety and regulation before learning engagement, with expectations flexed during periods of dysregulation.</li> <li>• Learning activities are shaped around known emotional and sensory stressors, with adjustments made to reduce the risk of overwhelm.</li> <li>• Support is highly structured, emotionally informed and sustained.</li> <li>• Adults prioritise co-regulation to support emotional safety and availability.</li> <li>• Emotional learning is revisited frequently through multiple contexts.</li> <li>• Children are supported to tolerate gradually increasing social and emotional demand.</li> <li>• Activities are adapted to protect wellbeing and reduce escalation.</li> <li>• Support focuses on engagement, security and emotional readiness for learning.</li> <li>• Opportunities for co regulation and emotional recovery are embedded within learning and play, rather than as separate activities.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Specialist</b>     | <p>Showing complex, severe and enduring SEMH needs with a profound impact on emotional wellbeing, functioning and participation. They may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience sustained and extreme emotional distress or dysregulation</li> <li>• Show pervasive anxiety, withdrawal or emotional shutdown</li> <li>• Be unable to tolerate everyday demands, routines or social interaction</li> <li>• Have very limited capacity to form or maintain relationships</li> <li>• Demonstrate highly rigid or trauma-related responses to change or expectation</li> <li>• Show very limited emotional availability for engagement or learning</li> <li>• Require a high level of predictability to feel safe within the environment</li> <li>• Have SEMH needs deeply interwoven with other areas of development</li> <li>• Present with a profile indicating significant impact on daily functioning within the setting</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional safety and wellbeing are prioritised, and learning happens when the child is calm enough to engage.</li> <li>• Support for learning is highly individual and built around the child's emotional needs on that day, recognising that readiness for learning can change quickly.</li> <li>• Learning focuses on a small number of key priorities that the child feels safe engaging with.</li> <li>• Activities are short, predictable and carefully structured, with clear beginnings and endings to reduce anxiety.</li> <li>• Adults model and repeat learning many times, supporting the child to re-engage after periods of emotional distress.</li> <li>• Familiar adults provide consistent emotional support to help the child feel safe, settled and able to take part.</li> <li>• Learning opportunities may need to be very brief, with planned breaks for regulation and recovery before continuing.</li> <li>• Expectations are adjusted during periods of distress, with a focus on helping the child feel safe and connected rather than completing tasks.</li> <li>• Success is seen in small but important gains, such as staying engaged for longer, communicating feelings, accepting support, or taking part alongside others.</li> <li>• Progress is understood over time and may be uneven. Some days the focus will be on emotional wellbeing rather than learning.</li> </ul> |

# Guidance for Schools

This section explains how the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework should be applied in practice for school aged children and young people in primary and secondary mainstream schools. The Framework provides a structured way to identify need, plan support and review impact over time. It supports consistent decision making and helps ensure that provision remains proportionate, evidence informed and responsive to how pupils' needs change as they progress through statutory education.

## Using the Framework in Schools

These tiers describe levels of response to school aged children and young people's needs within mainstream provision. They help schools consider whether a pupil's needs, the support in place, and the impact of that support are appropriately aligned.

Each tier builds cumulatively on the one before. Where a pupil is identified as requiring support at a higher tier, this assumes that provision at previous tiers has already been implemented consistently and reviewed for impact. Decisions about tiering must therefore reflect not only the pupil's presenting needs, but also the quality, consistency and effectiveness of the support being delivered.

Where there is a mismatch between need and provision, this should be addressed as a provision and implementation issue, rather than an automatic indication that a pupil requires a higher tier of support. Schools are expected to use the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycle to understand need, plan provision purposefully and evaluate impact over time.

Where pupils require support Targeted provision or above, this should be recorded through a SEN Support Plan, informed by ongoing assessment and professional judgement. Provision mapping plays an important role in this process and should reflect the full range of support in place, including classroom adaptations, targeted or specialist interventions and any involvement from external services.

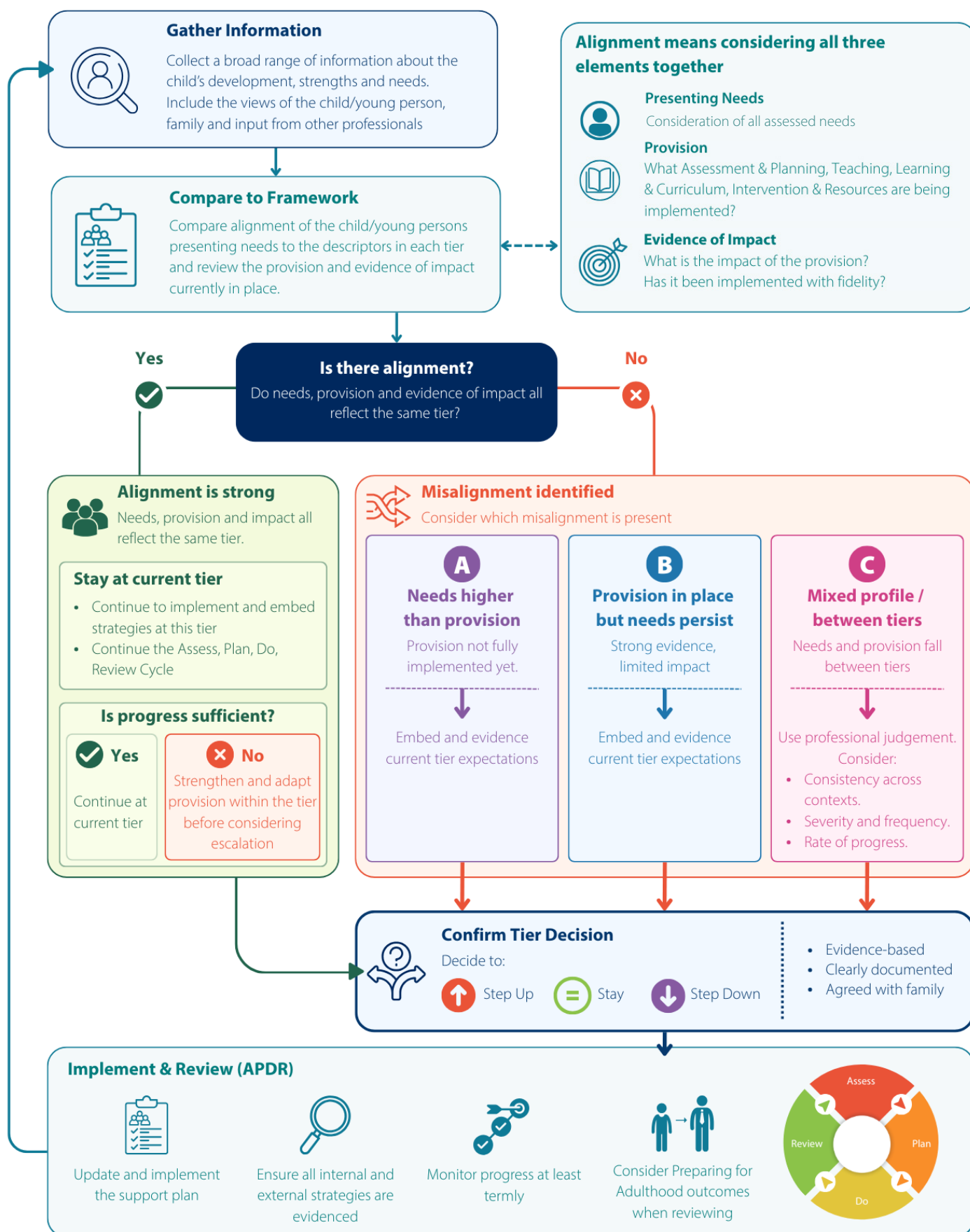
Review should take place at least termly and consider progress across learning, engagement, behaviour, attendance and wellbeing. As pupils move through Key Stages, reviews should increasingly take account of Preparation for Adulthood outcomes, ensuring that support helps pupils develop independence, confidence and readiness for their next stage.

In most cases, SEND Support for school aged pupils should be delivered through high quality inclusive teaching and targeted provision funded from the school's notional SEND budget. SENDCOs should have sufficient oversight to ensure that resources, including where pupils also attract other funding streams, are deployed appropriately and transparently.

Where schools are seeking additional funding or support, they must be able to demonstrate that the graduated response has been implemented with fidelity and reviewed over time. Evidence should show how resources have been used, what impact they have had, and why the pupil's needs continue to require a higher level of support despite this provision. Information about additional resource for schools can be found on the SEND Local Offer (<https://sendlocaloffer.southtyneside.gov.uk/>) or SEND Professional Portal ([https://southtynesidegovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/EXT\\_SEND\\_LO\\_Professionals\\_Portal\\_GRP\\_STC/SitePages/South-Tyneside-SEND-Local-Offer-Professional-Portal.aspx](https://southtynesidegovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/EXT_SEND_LO_Professionals_Portal_GRP_STC/SitePages/South-Tyneside-SEND-Local-Offer-Professional-Portal.aspx)).

## Identifying and Reviewing the Appropriate Tier

The SEND In Mainstream Settings framework is built on the principle of a graduated response, where support is layered and refined based on the child's evolving needs. A critical aspect of this approach is ensuring that the assessment, planning, and teaching strategies from the previous range are fully embedded and evidenced before considering movement to a higher range.





## Cognition & Learning

Cognition encompasses the thinking skills and thought processes that children and young people develop from their unique experiences. Learning needs can present differently across subjects and situations, reflecting individual strengths and areas for growth. As highlighted in Section 6.30 of the SEND Code of Practice, 'Support for learning difficulties may be required when children and young people learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with appropriate differentiation.' Before considering the Cognition and Learning threshold descriptors, it is important to recognise each child or young person's educational journey, including their patterns of attendance and any potential gaps that could influence progress. Equally, it is essential to ensure access to a broad and balanced curriculum and to provide Quality First Teaching that builds on each learner's prior knowledge and abilities.

Cognition and Learning needs may be broad, spanning much of the curriculum, or focused within specific areas. These needs can be temporary or ongoing. To determine the most appropriate level of support, it is helpful to review a child's achievements across a range of activities and celebrate the progress they make as they consolidate new learning before moving on.

Children and young people's learning profiles often include areas of strength and those requiring further development. For example, they may excel in reading, writing, spelling, and numeracy, while benefiting from additional opportunities to deepen comprehension, strengthen processing skills such as inference and elaboration, or enhance sequencing and organisational strategies. Some learners may demonstrate creative problem-solving, a strong working memory, or visual pattern recognition, while also building skills in executive functioning, task completion, or place-keeping activities such as copying from the board or navigating a textbook. Recognising the shape and orientation of letters and numbers, associating sounds with letters, and recalling recent learning are all skills that can be nurtured through positive reinforcement and tailored support that values individual progress.

## Universal: Cognition & Learning

### Descriptors of Need

Has developing cognition and learning skills that are broadly in line with age-related expectations, though may show natural variation in learning pace and profile. They may:

- Be developing foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, processing and understanding
- Show minor and temporary gaps in learning, that are not consistent across subjects.
- Work at a slower pace than peers and may not always complete work within expected timescales.
- Require occasional repetition or clarification to secure understanding.
- Demonstrate emerging ability to retain and apply learning, with some inconsistency across contexts.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress is monitored through routine class-based and school-wide assessments.</li> <li>• Class or subject teachers use ongoing formative assessment to inform next steps in learning.</li> <li>• The school uses its existing assessment methodologies to track progress over time.</li> <li>• Planning is responsive and rooted in Quality First Teaching principles.</li> <li>• QFT and adaptations are consistently implemented to address early gaps in learning.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality First Teaching includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- structured explanations with visual and concrete supports.</li> <li>- Consideration given to level, pace, and amount of teacher talk.</li> <li>- Explicit teaching of vocabulary and key concepts.</li> <li>- Regular opportunities for revision, overlearning and skill reinforcement.</li> <li>- Teaching approach support transfer and generalisation of learning.</li> <li>- Flexible grouping and seating to promote peer learning and collaboration</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Learning is delivered through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concrete, experiential and visual supports.</li> <li>- Multi sensory learning opportunities.</li> <li>- Strategies that promote cognitive engagement, including thinking skills and problem solving.</li> <li>- Explicit links between new learning and prior knowledge, supported through review and overlearning.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning takes place within the classroom through QFT and adaptive teaching approaches.</li> <li>• Additional intervention is not typically required at this stage.</li> <li>• No additional adult support is required beyond that normally available in the classroom.</li> <li>• Staff understand how to adapt teaching approaches to meet individual learning needs within everyday practice.</li> <li>• All school staff access regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to build confidence and capacity in meeting diverse learning needs.</li> <li>• SENDCO supports whole-school practice, quality assurance and professional learning.</li> </ul> |

## Universal Plus: Cognition & Learning

### Descriptors of Need

Has emerging needs that are more noticeable and may affect progress in specific areas of the curriculum. They may:

- Have identifiable gaps in core literacy and/or numeracy skills that are not closing as quickly as expected.
- Be working towards age-related expectations but currently attain at a slower pace than peers.
- Experience differences in acquiring, retaining and/or applying learning, particularly when concepts increase in complexity.
- Find the typical pace, volume or language demands of elements of the curriculum more challenging than peers.
- Require more repetition to secure understanding and struggle to generalise learning independently.
- Show uneven attainment with relative strength in some areas and emerging differences in others.
- Experience differences in organisation, working memory or task initiation that affect independent learning.
- Begin to show reduced confidence, motivation or persistence when learning feels challenging.
- Have learning influenced by other factors e.g., language, attention, emotional or environmental needs that should be considered alongside cognition and learning.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <b>In addition to Universal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching plans clearly reflect individual adjustments required to enable effective access to the curriculum and are responsive to the pupil's evolving needs and strengths.</li> <li>• Progress is monitored more closely to identify whether adaptations are reducing gaps in learning.</li> <li>• Time limited interventions are planned with clear intended outcomes and impact is reviewed.</li> <li>• Where gaps in learning are not closed, teachers discuss with SENDCO to consider whether additional observation or specific assessments tools that may support a clearer understanding of need.</li> </ul> | <b>In addition to Universal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning takes place in class with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More frequent use of adaptive teaching and scaffolded tasks within an inclusive curriculum.</li> <li>- Greater consideration given to level, pace, and amount of teacher talk.</li> <li>- Information is chunked into small, achievable steps to reduce cognitive load.</li> <li>- Pre-teaching of key vocabulary and concepts to support confidence and readiness for learning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Vocabulary and concept development are explicitly taught through structured activities, visual supports and repetition within an adapted curriculum.</li> <li>• Opportunities for small group / peer group work based on identified need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listening and thinking skills</li> <li>- Reading and literacy development</li> <li>- Numeracy and mathematical understanding</li> <li>- Mixed ability groupings are used to reflect the pupil's cognitive strengths, ensuring opportunities for success and peer interaction.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <b>In addition to Universal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The class teacher remains the primary provider of teaching; where gaps persist, advice and guidance are sought from the SENDCO.</li> <li>• Carefully planned, time-limited interventions are used to promote positive learning experiences and build confidence and motivation.</li> <li>• Interventions have clear entry and exit criteria to monitor effectiveness and inform future planning.</li> <li>• Time-limited interventions are delivered in an appropriate environment to support focus and engagement.</li> <li>• Additional adults may support learning flexibly under the direction of the teacher, without creating dependency.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted: Cognition & Learning

### Descriptors of Need

Has difficulties that are impacting access to learning and progress across one or more areas of the curriculum. They may:

- Have wider gaps in core literacy and/or numeracy skills that affect participation and progress across the curriculum.
- Be working below age-related expectations and make slower progress than peers, despite appropriate teaching and regular attendance.
- Experience difficulties with processing, sequencing, memory or following multi-step instructions.
- Struggle to retain learning over time or apply it in different contexts.
- Show difficulties in sustaining attention, effort or engagement in learning tasks.
- Find challenge in accessing large amounts of content and demonstrate understanding.
- Demonstrate uneven cognitive strengths, with some areas masking underlying difficulties.
- Experience reduced self-esteem or motivation linked to repeated experiences of difficulty or perceived failure.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment focuses on identifying barriers to learning, including patterns related to processing, retention, application of skills, or pace of learning.</li> <li>• Teachers gather and review evidence over time to understand how difficulties impact progress across subjects and contexts.</li> <li>• SENDCO supports the use of targeted assessment approaches to clarify the nature and extent of learning difficulties.</li> <li>• Planning includes specific, measurable outcomes related to closing learning gaps, building independence, and improving access to learning.</li> <li>• Plans are shared with relevant staff to ensure consistency and coherence across lessons and learning environments.</li> <li>• Targets are individualised, short-term, and specific, enabling focused teaching and measurable progress.</li> <li>• The school maintains regular engagement with parents/carers, ensuring they are informed and involved.</li> <li>• Where appropriate the pupil is involved in personalised learning targets.</li> <li>• Where assessment evidence indicates persistent barriers to learning despite targeted support, advice from specialist services (e.g. Educational Psychology or specialist teachers) is sought to deepen understanding of the pupil's learning profile and inform next steps.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning continues to take place within the classroom through an inclusive curriculum, with consistent and intentional adaptation to address identified learning barriers.</li> <li>• Teaching incorporates increased scaffolding, including modelling, worked examples, sentence stems, visual prompts and structured frameworks.</li> <li>• Learning is broken into clearly sequenced, manageable chunks, with explicit success criteria to support understanding and independence.</li> <li>• Key concepts and skills are revisited regularly through planned repetition and overlearning, supporting retention over time.</li> <li>• Teachers use flexible pacing, allowing additional time for processing, task initiation and completion where needed.</li> <li>• Vocabulary, language structures and subject-specific terminology are explicitly taught, revisited and reinforced across lessons.</li> <li>• Opportunities for guided practice are built into lessons before independent application.</li> <li>• Small-group teaching within lessons is used strategically to support understanding, rehearsal and confidence.</li> <li>• Tasks are adapted to reduce cognitive load while maintaining access to age-appropriate curriculum content.</li> <li>• Learning activities draw on the pupil's strengths and interests to sustain motivation and engagement.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is informed by advice from the SENDCO and, where appropriate, specialist teachers or other professionals.</li> <li>• Additional adults provide targeted support, individually or in small groups, under the direction of the class teacher and aligned to agreed learning priorities.</li> <li>• Support focuses on specific learning needs, such as processing, memory, literacy, numeracy or organisational skills.</li> <li>• Targeted teaching may include short, structured learning episodes within the main classroom, planned purposefully and reviewed regularly.</li> <li>• Adults supporting learning are trained to deliver agreed approaches consistently and confidently.</li> <li>• Resources are selected to support concept development, retention and application (e.g. practical materials, visual supports, structured learning tools).</li> <li>• The pupil remains mostly included in mainstream lessons, with any withdrawal used sparingly and purposefully to support access to learning.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted Plus: Cognition & Learning

### Descriptors of Need

Has more significant persistent difficulties that affect progress, independence and access to learning across most curriculum areas. They may:

- Have significant and sustained gaps in literacy, numeracy and/or core learning skills that are not closing over time.
- Be working well below age-related expectations with progress that is fragile or inconsistent.
- Experience marked difficulties with memory, processing speed, attention or executive functioning.
- Struggle to understand, retain or apply learning event when concepts have been revisited multiple times.
- Find it difficult to manage cognitive load, leading to fatigue, disengagement or task avoidance.
- Require learning to be broken into very small chunks to access and demonstrate understanding.
- Depend heavily on adult support to initiate, sustain and complete learning tasks.
- Experience heightened frustration, anxiety or low confidence related to learning demands.
- Have co-occurring needs that further compound learning difficulties.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment draws together multiple sources of evidence (classwork, observations, progress data, pupil voice, parent/carer insight) to build a detailed learning profile.</li> <li>• SENDCO coordinates a more in-depth analysis of cognition and learning needs, including how memory, processing, attention and executive functioning affect progress and independence.</li> <li>• Specialist advice from Educational Psychology and/or specialist teachers is routinely integrated into assessment and planning to inform highly individualised approaches and support sustained progress.</li> <li>• Where appropriate, standardised or specialist assessment tools are used to deepen understanding of learning difficulties and inform planning.</li> <li>• Planning is increasingly individualised, reflecting the pupil's specific learning profile, strengths and vulnerabilities.</li> <li>• Outcomes focus on securing foundational skills, reducing reliance on adult support, and improving learning stamina and confidence.</li> <li>• Progress is reviewed regularly, with adjustments made in response to fragile or uneven progress.</li> <li>• Patterns suggesting that needs are becoming complex, entrenched or resistant to intervention are identified and escalated for further discussion.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is highly structured and deliberately shaped around the pupil's individual learning profile, including memory, processing speed, attention and executive functioning needs.</li> <li>• Curriculum content is prioritised and sequenced to ensure secure acquisition of foundational knowledge and skills before progression.</li> <li>• Learning tasks are broken into very small, clearly defined steps, with frequent checking for understanding.</li> <li>• Explanations are simplified and supported through multi-modal approaches (visual, verbal, practical), with reduced language complexity.</li> <li>• Opportunities for overlearning and cumulative review are embedded systematically to support fragile retention.</li> <li>• Teachers provide ongoing guided support during learning to help pupils apply strategies, organise thinking and sustain effort.</li> <li>• Independence is developed gradually through supported choice-making, structured routines and explicit strategy teaching.</li> <li>• Flexible grouping is used intentionally to balance access to peer learning with reduced cognitive and social demand.</li> <li>• Learning expectations are adapted responsively when cognitive fatigue or overload impacts engagement.</li> <li>• Curriculum experiences are carefully designed to minimise unnecessary demands and maximise opportunities for success.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing and resources are deployed more intensively and consistently to meet persistent and complex learning needs.</li> <li>• Additional adults provide regular, structured support to help the pupil access learning, sustain engagement and develop independence.</li> <li>• Specialist advice (e.g. Educational Psychology, specialist teachers) informs the selection and delivery of resources and approaches.</li> <li>• Learning resources are highly individualised, supporting areas such as working memory, sequencing, reasoning, literacy and numeracy development.</li> <li>• Assistive strategies and tools are introduced where appropriate to reduce barriers to learning and support access to the curriculum.</li> <li>• Interventions are closely monitored, with frequent review to ensure they remain effective and proportionate.</li> <li>• Withdrawal from class is carefully planned, time-limited and balanced with inclusion in mainstream</li> </ul> |

## Specialist: Cognition & Learning

### Descriptors of Need

Has severe, complex enduring difficulties that profoundly affect progress, independence and access to learning across all curriculum areas. These needs are evident in all learning contexts They may:

- Have significant learning difficulties or specific learning profiles that substantially limit acquisition of literacy, numeracy and wider curriculum skills.
- Be working substantially below age-related expectations, with progress that is very slow, uneven or highly fragile.
- Experience significant difficulties with memory, processing, abstraction, reasoning or attention that impede learning even when tasks are simplified.
- Require very high levels of repetition to retain learning, with frequent loss of previously acquired skills.
- Struggle to engage with typical curriculum demands due to cognitive overload or limited learning stamina.
- Have severely reduced independence, requiring continuous support to access, process and demonstrate learning.
- Experience pronounced emotional responses linked to learning (e.g. anxiety, withdrawal, avoidance) as a result of repeated challenge or failure.
- Present with complex, overlapping needs that significantly compound cognition and learning difficulties.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is comprehensive and holistic, integrating educational, developmental and (where relevant) multi-agency information to understand complex learning needs.</li> <li>• SENDCO coordinates assessment activity to ensure a clear, shared understanding of the pupil's enduring cognition and learning profile.</li> <li>• Specialist assessments are used to identify significant learning difficulties or specific learning profiles, and findings are clearly translated into planning.</li> <li>• Planning is highly personalised, prioritising access to learning, independence, emotional wellbeing and realistic progress pathways.</li> <li>• Outcomes recognise that progress may be slow, uneven or fragile, and include maintaining skills as well as developing new ones.</li> <li>• Specialist advice forms a core part of ongoing assessment and planning, supporting a shared multi agency understanding of the pupil's enduring needs and informing.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is highly individualised, based on a detailed understanding of the pupil's cognition and learning profile and how they best access, process and retain information.</li> <li>• Curriculum content is significantly adapted and prioritised, focusing on essential learning, functional application and meaningful engagement.</li> <li>• Learning is delivered through short, structured teaching sequences, with repetition and consolidation central to lesson design.</li> <li>• Concepts are introduced using concrete, practical and highly visual methods, with abstraction introduced slowly and selectively.</li> <li>• Very high levels of modelling, guided practice and supported application are required to enable access and progress.</li> <li>• Teaching explicitly supports working memory, attention and organisational skills, embedded within learning activities.</li> <li>• Expectations for pace, volume and independence are flexed in response to learning stamina and cognitive load.</li> <li>• Opportunities to demonstrate learning are varied, allowing pupils to show understanding in ways that reduce reliance on written output where appropriate.</li> <li>• Curriculum planning recognises that progress may be small, uneven or fragile, and values consolidation and maintenance of skills.</li> <li>• Learning experiences prioritise success, confidence and engagement, alongside long-term development of core cognitive skills.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing arrangements are highly individualised, providing consistent support to enable access to learning throughout the school day.</li> <li>• Additional adults work closely with the class teacher to implement highly personalised approaches informed by specialist advice.</li> <li>• Specialist teachers and Educational Psychology input are integral to shaping resources, strategies and day-to-day support.</li> <li>• Assistive technology and specialist resources (e.g. text-to-speech, recording tools, adapted writing supports) are embedded as the pupil's usual way of working, not as add-ons.</li> <li>• Learning resources prioritise functional application, consolidation and maintenance of skills as well as new learning.</li> <li>• The balance between in-class learning and structured withdrawal is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains appropriate, inclusive and effective.</li> </ul> |



# Communication and Interaction:

## Social Communication and Interaction

Social communication and interaction encompass how children and young people understand, use and respond to communication, social cues and relationships within their learning environment. These skills develop through experience, interaction and familiarity with social contexts, and are shaped by individual differences, developmental stage and the demands of the environment. Differences in social communication and interaction can affect how pupils engage with learning, participate alongside peers and manage the social and emotional aspects of school life.

Children and young people who experience barriers related to understanding and using language, social communication and flexible interaction may present with or without a formal diagnosis, and will benefit from similar approaches to support regardless of whether a specific condition has been identified.

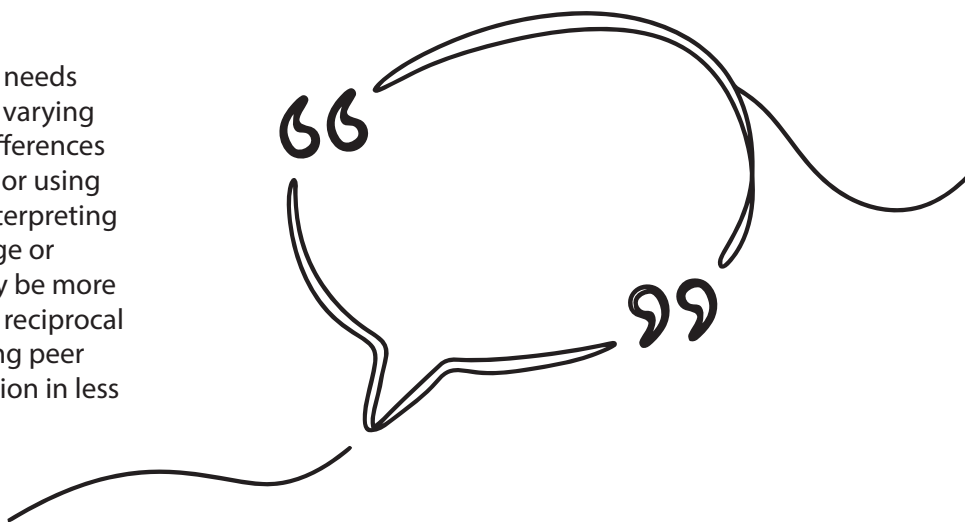
Before considering the Social Communication and Interaction threshold descriptors, it is important to understand each pupil's context and experience over time. This includes their familiarity with routines, expectations and social environments; their opportunities for meaningful interaction; and any factors such as anxiety, transitions, attendance patterns or previous experiences that may influence how they communicate and relate to others. It is equally important to ensure that pupils have access to a predictable, inclusive learning environment and high-quality teaching approaches that reduce ambiguity and support understanding.

Social communication and interaction needs can present in different ways and with varying degrees of impact. For some pupils, differences may relate primarily to understanding or using language in social contexts, such as interpreting spoken instructions, figurative language or non-verbal cues. For others, needs may be more closely linked to social understanding, reciprocal interaction or flexible thinking, affecting peer relationships, group work or participation in less structured parts of the school day.

These needs may fluctuate over time and across contexts, particularly as social and academic demands increase.

Many children and young people with social communication and interaction differences will show a profile of uneven development, with clear strengths alongside areas requiring additional support. For example, a pupil may demonstrate strong subject knowledge, memory or problem-solving skills, while finding it harder to interpret social situations, manage group interaction or adapt to change. Others may communicate confidently in familiar or one-to-one situations, but experience difficulty in whole-class discussions, busy environments or unfamiliar social settings. Some pupils develop learned strategies to cope with social demands, which can be effective in predictable conditions but may be less reliable at times of stress or heightened expectation.

Recognising these patterns helps schools to identify the most appropriate level of support and to value progress in communication, interaction and social understanding alongside academic achievement. Reviewing how pupils respond across a range of activities and situations, and celebrating small but meaningful gains in engagement, confidence and participation, supports accurate identification and ensures that support remains proportionate, responsive and centred on individual need.



## Universal: Social Communication & Interaction

### Descriptors of Need

Has differences that may be observed at times but do not limit access to learning or participation. They may:

- Show differences in how they initiate, respond to or sustain social interaction with peers and adults.
- Experience occasional misunderstandings of social rules, group dynamics or shared expectations.
- May experience some challenges in interpreting non-verbal communication such as body language, facial expression or tone of voice, particularly with unfamiliar adults and peers.
- Show a preference for predictable routines and familiar contexts, with some uncertainty during transitions or unstructured times.
- Show differences in play, imagination or perspective taking that may affect peer interaction in some contexts.
- Occasionally misinterpret language, particularly abstract, implied or figurative meanings.
- Display sensory preferences or sensitivities that are noticeable at times but generally manageable in everyday environments.
- Use strategies e.g., observation, imitation, avoidance to navigate social situation with variable success.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress and participation are monitored through routine classroom observation and everyday interaction across lessons and unstructured times.</li> <li>• Class or subject teachers use ongoing formative assessment to understand how social communication differences may affect engagement, interaction and learning.</li> <li>• Planning is responsive and rooted in Quality First Teaching principles, supporting clarity, predictability and inclusion</li> <li>• Information from home-school communication contributes to a shared understanding of the pupil's strengths, preferences and emerging differences.</li> <li>• Adjustments within everyday practice are reviewed informally to ensure the pupil continues to access learning and social opportunities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality First Teaching that supports clarity, consistency, predictability and inclusion incorporating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intentional adaptation to support understanding, participation social communication and interaction.</li> <li>- Clear consistent routines and expectations</li> <li>- Visual timetables, written cues and visual supports to aid understanding.</li> <li>- Simplified, concrete language and chunked instructions.</li> <li>- Opportunities for repetition and reinforcement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Learning activities include structured opportunities for peer interaction, turn-taking and collaborative learning.</li> <li>• Flexible approaches are used to support pupils in following instructions and recording work, including alternative formats where appropriate.</li> <li>• Whole school approaches include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An inclusive, communication-friendly ethos, recognising and valuing different forms of communication, interaction and processing.</li> <li>- Clear, predictable and consistently applied routines and expectations with preparation for change embedded into daily routines.</li> <li>- A curriculum that reflects and celebrates diversity, fostering respect and inclusion.</li> <li>- An inclusive ethos that promotes learning, wellbeing, and belonging for all pupils.</li> <li>- A strong PSHE / PD offer is well-planned, stimulating, and responsive to cohort needs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible use of classroom resources supports inclusive practice and responsive teaching.</li> <li>• No additional adult support is required beyond what is normally available within the classroom.</li> <li>• Staff are aware of how to adapt their communication, language and expectations to meet individual needs.</li> <li>• Staff access training to support understanding of social communication differences and inclusive classroom practice.</li> </ul> |

## Universal Plus: Social Communication & Interaction

### Descriptors of Need

Has differences that are more frequent or noticeable and may affect access to learning and participation in a range of contexts. They may

- Experience challenges understanding and using verbal and non-verbal communication, particularly in group situations.
- Struggle to interpret social cues, intentions, or expectations, leading to confusion, withdrawal, or misunderstandings with peers.
- Find figurative language, inference, humour or implied meaning challenging, affecting comprehension across the curriculum.
- Show differences in social imagination, perspective-taking or flexibility of thinking that impact collaborative learning.
- Experience greater difficulty in unfamiliar, unpredictable or less structured environments.
- Show increasing reliance on familiar routines and may become unsettled by changes in expectation, staffing or environment.
- Demonstrate sensory processing differences that can affect concentration, comfort or engagement in busy or noisy settings.
- Use coping strategies to manage social interaction which may be less effective when demands increase or anxiety is present.
- Begin to experience reduced confidence, increased anxiety or social vulnerability linked to communication and interaction demands.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers use more focused observation to identify patterns, triggers and contexts where social communication difficulties are more apparent.</li> <li>• Planning reflects individual adjustments to support understanding, participation and interaction, and is responsive to evolving needs.</li> <li>• Pupil views are gathered informally to support understanding of preferences, interests and emerging communication needs.</li> <li>• Strengths and interests are identified and considered within planning to support engagement and participation.</li> <li>• Parents/carers are engaged in regular dialogue to share observations and promote a consistent understanding.</li> <li>• Information about the pupil's communication profile and strengths is shared proactively with relevant staff to support consistency.</li> <li>• Progress is monitored more closely to identify whether adaptations are reducing barriers to learning and social inclusion.</li> <li>• Where difficulties persist, teachers work with the SENDCO to consider whether further observation or assessment approaches would support planning.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning takes place in class with                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More frequent and intentional adaptation to support social communication and interaction.</li> <li>- Increased use of visual and written supports to aid understanding</li> <li>- Greater attention to language complexity, pacing and clarity</li> <li>- Pre-teaching of key vocabulary and concepts where this supports confidence and readiness</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Structured approaches support access to learning, including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visual timetables and task schedules</li> <li>- Concrete and experiential learning opportunities</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teaching approaches are adapted to reflect differences with social understanding, inference, and expressive or receptive language.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities for small-group or peer-group learning are built into routines to rehearse communication and interaction skills.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The class teacher remains the primary provider of teaching, with advice and guidance from the SENDCO where needed.</li> <li>• Carefully planned time-limited, interventions are used to develop social communication, interaction and emotional literacy skills.</li> <li>• Interventions have a clear entry and exit criteria to monitor effectiveness and inform future planning.</li> <li>• Additional adults may support learning flexibly under the direction of the teacher, without creating dependency.</li> <li>• The learning environment may be adapted (e.g. quieter working areas) to support focus and reduce social or sensory demand.</li> <li>• Time-limited interventions are delivered in an appropriate environment to support focus and engagement.</li> <li>• Staff access additional training to strengthen confidence in:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social communication strategies.</li> <li>- De-escalation and supportive interaction.</li> <li>- Inclusive classroom practices.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

## Targeted: Social Communication & Interaction

### Descriptors of Need

Has difficulties that are impacting access to learning, relationships and participation across a range of contexts. They may:

- Experience difficulties understanding and using verbal and non-verbal communication, particularly within group or whole-class situations.
- Experience difficulties interpreting social cues, intentions, or expectations, leading to frequent misunderstandings, social withdrawal, or conflict with peers.
- Find figurative language, inference, implied meaning and abstract concepts consistently challenging, affecting comprehension across curriculum areas.
- Show marked difficulty with reciprocal interaction, including turn-taking, topic maintenance, and responding appropriately to others.
- Experience challenges with perspective-taking, imagination or flexible thinking that impact collaborative learning and peer relationships.
- Become anxious or distressed when routines change, expectations are unclear, or social demands increase.
- Demonstrate sensory processing differences that regularly interfere with concentration, comfort or engagement, particularly in busy or noisy environments.
- Rely on learned coping strategies to manage social situations, which may break down under increased stress or cognitive demand.
- Begin to experience social vulnerability, reduced confidence or avoidance of social or learning situations.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  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| <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment focuses on identifying barriers to communication, interaction and participation across learning and social contexts.</li> <li>• Teacher gathers evidence from multiple sources (classroom observation, unstructured times, pupil voice, parent/carer insight) to build a clearer profile of need.</li> <li>• SENDCO supports the use of structured observation and assessment approaches to better understand social communication strengths and difficulties.</li> <li>• Planning includes clear, measurable outcomes related to communication, interaction, participation and emotional wellbeing.</li> <li>• Plans are shared with staff working with the pupil to ensure a consistent approach across lessons and social times.</li> <li>• The school maintains regular engagement with parents/carers ensuring they are informed and involved.</li> <li>• Pupil voice is gathered in structured ways to inform assessment and planning, supporting understanding of social communication strengths, needs and experiences.</li> <li>• Assessment and planning include strengths-based profiling to identify motivators, preferred communication styles and supportive learning contexts.</li> <li>• Where appropriate the pupil is involved in personalised learning targets.</li> <li>• Progress towards outcomes is reviewed regularly, with adjustments made where impact is limited.</li> <li>• Where assessment evidence indicates prolonged difficulties, advice from specialist services e.g., Speech &amp; Language Therapy, Educational Psychology, Inclusion Service may be sought to deepen understanding and inform next steps.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning remains primarily within the classroom, with noticeable and consistent adaptation to support access and participation.</li> <li>• Teaching explicitly supports social meaning, not just task completion including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Modelling of social language, turn taking and collaborative thinking.</li> <li>- Explicit explanation of 'hidden curriculum' expectations e.g., group roles, classroom norms, peer interaction expectations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teaching approaches are shaped by the pupil's identified profile, including difficulties with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social understanding and reciprocity</li> <li>- Flexible thinking</li> <li>- Emotional literacy and peer interaction</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Curriculum access is supported through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adapted presentation and outcomes</li> <li>- Consistent visual systems and structured routines</li> <li>- Reduced language complexity and explicit clarification</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group work is intentionally structured with defined roles, clear communication expectations, adult-facilitated rehearsal of interaction skills where appropriate.</li> <li>• Curriculum delivery anticipates points of social complexity e.g., debate, perspective-taking, inference heavy subjects and is adapted accordingly.</li> <li>• Planned opportunities for pupils to generalise social communication skills across subjects and contexts are provided.</li> <li>• Enhanced PSHE provision supports the development of communication, relationships and emotional understanding.</li> <li>• Preparation for change is extended and explicitly planned to reduce anxiety and increase predictability.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted support is provided during identified points of vulnerability, including transitions and unstructured times focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enabling access</li> <li>- Supporting interaction</li> <li>- Reducing vulnerability</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Visual and concrete communication supports are personalised and used consistently across lessons and unstructured times to enable understanding and reduce reliance on adult interpretation. These may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visual schedules / task sequences</li> <li>- Now/next boards and transition support</li> <li>- Visual instructions and success criteria</li> <li>- Social narratives / visual rules and boundaries</li> <li>- Conversation maps, comic strip conversations, structured scripts</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Environmental adaptations (e.g. low-arousal areas, regulation zones) are used purposefully to support regulation and engagement and are reviewed for effectiveness, ensuring they enable participation rather than avoidance or isolation.</li> <li>• Staff use shared language and agreed approaches to support consistency across lessons and unstructured times.</li> <li>• Additional adults provide support under the direction of the class teacher without creating dependency.</li> <li>• Advice from specialist services may be used to inform planning and practice.</li> <li>• Staff working directly with the pupil access specialist training and guidance (e.g. AET frameworks, ELKLAN, recognised best practice).</li> <li>• The pupil remains included in mainstream learning, with limited withdrawal that is purposeful and regularly reviewed.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted Plus: Social Communication & Interaction

### Descriptors of Need

Has complex difficulties that significantly affect learning, emotional wellbeing and social inclusion across most contexts. They may:

- Have substantial difficulty understanding, using and adapting communication across different people, settings and situations.
- Experience frequent breakdowns in social interaction, resulting in isolation, heightened anxiety, emotional dysregulation or increased vulnerability.
- Struggle significantly with understanding social rules, boundaries, intentions and expectations, even in familiar contexts.
- Find it difficult to manage group learning, collaborative tasks or unstructured social situations without experiencing overwhelm or withdrawal.
- Demonstrate rigid or inflexible thinking patterns that limit adaptability, problem-solving and social learning.
- Show pronounced sensory sensitivities or sensory-seeking behaviours that significantly impact participation and emotional regulation.
- Have difficulty recognising or communicating internal states, needs or emotions, affecting self-advocacy and help-seeking.
- Rely heavily on predictable routines, familiar people and structured environments to feel safe and able to engage.
- Experience increasing anxiety, frustration or distress linked to social communication demands, which may compound other areas of need.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and planning draw on input from relevant specialist professionals and multi-source evidence to develop a holistic, detailed understanding of the pupil's social communication profile.</li> <li>• SENDCO coordinates a more in-depth analysis of how communication and interaction difficulties affect learning, relationships and emotional wellbeing across contexts.</li> <li>• Specialist assessment and advice are routinely integrated into planning to support highly individualised approaches.</li> <li>• Planning reflects a nuanced profile of strengths, needs, triggers and protective factors, supporting anticipation rather than reaction.</li> <li>• Outcomes focus on improving functional communication, participation, emotional safety and independence.</li> <li>• Pupil voice is actively included using accessible and adapted formats (e.g. visuals, symbols, AAC) to support meaningful participation.</li> <li>• Detailed strengths and interests mapping informs highly individualised planning, supporting motivation and engagement.</li> <li>• Dynamic planning cycles are embedded, with frequent review and adjustment informed by progress, wellbeing and stakeholder feedback.</li> <li>• Transition planning is introduced early where social communication needs indicate increased vulnerability to change.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is highly structured and deliberately sequenced to support communication access, emotional safety and sustained engagement across the day.</li> <li>• Curriculum content is significantly adapted to reduce social and cognitive load, increase predictability and prioritise functional communication, interaction and independence alongside academic learning.</li> <li>• Learning is designed around the pupil's profile accommodating differences in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inference, figurative language and implied meaning.</li> <li>- Perspective-taking and social imagination.</li> <li>- Flexible thinking and tolerance of uncertainty.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Teaching strategies include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit teaching of 'hidden curriculum' expectations.</li> <li>• Pre-learning and overlapping of key concepts to support readiness and reduce uncertainty.</li> <li>• Clear modelling, rehearsal and support complication of communication strategies.</li> <li>• Flexible pacing with built-in processing time and planned pauses.</li> <li>• Tasks are adapted so the pupil can demonstrate understanding without social communication barriers.</li> <li>• Curriculum delivery intentionally builds opportunities for generalisation of skills across subjects and contexts.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual and concrete communication supports are highly personalised and used consistently across lessons and unstructured times to enable understanding and reduce reliance on adult interpretation.</li> <li>• Visual systems are explicitly taught, modelled and referenced so they become meaningful tools rather than passive prompts.</li> <li>• Sensory and regulation resources are embedded as enablers of participation, including access to calm/low-arousal spaces and predictable recovery routines.</li> <li>• Staff receive targeted training to implement curriculum adaptations and inclusive strategies effectively.</li> <li>• Specialist advice (e.g., Inclusion Service, SALT, EP, specialist teachers) informs the choice and use of resources, not just intervention content.</li> <li>• Interventions and targeted approaches are implemented consistently and are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linked to the pupil's identified profile</li> <li>- Reinforced through everyday classroom practice</li> <li>- Reviewed frequently for real-world impact (participation, interaction, independence, wellbeing)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Staffing and resources are deployed flexibly to provide predictable support at points of vulnerability (transitions, group learning, unstructured times), while actively building independence and avoiding learned dependency.</li> </ul> |

## Specialist: Social Communication & Interaction

### Descriptors of Need

Has complex enduring difficulties that profoundly affect progress, independence and access to learning across all curriculum areas. These needs are evident in all learning contexts.

They may:

- Experience pervasive difficulties with social communication, including understanding and using verbal language, non-verbal communication and social conventions.
- Be unable to consistently interpret social cues, intentions or boundaries, placing them at significant risk of misunderstanding, isolation or exploitation.
- Struggle profoundly with social reciprocity, perspective-taking and flexible interaction, limiting meaningful peer relationships.
- Experience extreme anxiety or distress in response to social, sensory or environmental demands, often resulting in withdrawal, shutdown or escalation.
- Show highly rigid patterns of thinking and behaviour that significantly limit adaptability, tolerance of change and access to learning.
- Have pronounced sensory processing differences that severely impact daily functioning, participation and emotional regulation.
- Find it very difficult to communicate needs, emotions or experiences, particularly during periods of stress or overload.
- Rely almost entirely on predictability, structure and trusted relationships to engage with learning and social experiences.
- Present with complex, overlapping needs that significantly compound social communication difficulties.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  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| <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is comprehensive, holistic and multi-agency, integrating education, health, social care and family perspectives to understand complex and enduring needs.</li> <li>• SENDCO coordinates ongoing assessment activity to ensure a shared, accurate understanding of the pupil's social communication, interaction and sensory profile.</li> <li>• Specialist advice is essential and forms a core part of assessment and planning, informing highly personalised approaches.</li> <li>• Planning prioritises emotional safety, access to communication, relational security and participation across all contexts.</li> <li>• Outcomes reflect long-term development of communication, interaction and wellbeing, alongside maintaining engagement and reducing vulnerability.</li> <li>• Review processes are structured and frequent, evaluating whether needs can continue to be met within mainstream provision.</li> <li>• Multi-agency collaboration is integral to assessment and planning, bringing together education, health, social care and family perspectives to ensure a holistic and shared understanding of the pupil's needs and strengths.</li> <li>• Pupil voice is central to assessment and planning and is consistently captured through accessible, individualised formats.</li> <li>• Family-centred planning is prioritised, with parents and carers acting as co-authors of plans and partners in review and decision-making.</li> <li>• Dynamic, responsive planning cycles are essential, with frequent review and adaptation based on pupil progress, wellbeing and multi-agency feedback.</li> <li>• Transition planning is embedded early and coordinated, particularly for key changes, with clear roles, timelines and shared responsibility across agencies and family.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is highly individualised and consistently informed by a detailed understanding of the pupil's communication, interaction, sensory profile, and emotional safety needs.</li> <li>• Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles guide delivery so the pupil can access learning through multiple means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Representation (visual, concrete, experiential)</li> <li>- Expression (alternative ways to demonstrate learning)</li> <li>- Engagement (interest-based, strengths-led entry points)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Personalised learning pathways are used to support progress towards individualised goals that reflect the pupil's aspirations, strengths and developmental needs.</li> <li>• Curriculum content prioritises functional and meaningful learning, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication and self-advocacy</li> <li>- Independence and participation</li> <li>- Relational safety and belonging</li> <li>- Generalisation of skills across settings and contexts</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Integrated therapeutic input (e.g., SALT, OT, mental health support) is embedded within curriculum delivery and daily routines, rather than treated as a separate add-on.</li> <li>• Teaching explicitly supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- flexible thinking and coping with uncertainty</li> <li>- perspective-taking and social understanding</li> <li>- safe participation in group learning and wider school experiences</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expectations remain ambitious, recognising that progress may be uneven and that consolidation and maintenance are legitimate outcomes.</li> <li>• Life skills curriculum should be personalised and include opportunities for community-based learning, budgeting, travel training, and self-advocacy.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible teaching formats (e.g., outdoor learning, experiential tasks, creative arts) are used to engage diverse learners and build on their strengths</li> <li>• Social communication interventions e.g., Lego therapy are embedded where appropriate to support interaction and emotional development.</li> <li>• Co-regulation and emotional literacy strategies are embedded into daily routines, supporting pupils to identify and manage emotions.</li> <li>• Visual and concrete communication systems are central to access and underpin learning, interaction and emotional safety across the school day.</li> <li>• Resources are co-designed around the pupil (and where appropriate, with family input) to ensure consistency, relevance and ownership, and are reviewed as needs change.</li> <li>• Specialist advice (e.g., Educational Psychology, Inclusion Service, SALT, specialist teachers) is regular and integrated to ensure practice remains evidence-informed and neurodiversity-affirming.</li> <li>• Staffing models provide relational continuity and proactive support during periods of increased need (sensory overload, transitions, social complexity), while maintaining independence-building approaches.</li> <li>• Environment audits are conducted regularly to ensure sensory-friendly, communication-accessible spaces, including consistent visual signage and reduced ambiguity across the school environment.</li> <li>• Support is reviewed frequently to ensure it remains appropriate, sustainable and genuinely enabling access to mainstream learning.</li> </ul> |

# Communication and Interaction:

## Speech, Language & Communication

Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) describe difficulties related to how children and young people understand language, use spoken language, produce speech sounds and communicate effectively with others. These skills underpin access to learning, social relationships and emotional wellbeing, and develop through interaction, experience and exposure to rich language environments. Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs have difficulty in communicating with others, and their profiles may change over time as demands increase and contexts vary.

Children and young people may experience SLCN for a range of reasons, which often overlap. For some, there may be a primary developmental difficulty affecting speech sounds, language structure, understanding or fluency. For others, speech, language and communication differences may arise secondarily, linked to factors such as autism, hearing impairment, physical disability or cognition and learning needs. Reduced developmental opportunities, including limited exposure to language-rich interaction, can also influence language development. While speaking English as an additional language (EAL) does not in itself constitute SLCN, children and young people learning more than one language may experience temporary differences in language structure or phonology, and may also have an underlying speech, language or communication need that requires support.

Before considering the SLCN descriptors, it is important to understand each child or young person's communication profile in context. This includes their opportunities to communicate across different environments, their confidence and motivation to use language, and the extent to which everyday classroom practice supports understanding and expression. High-quality, communication-friendly teaching is central to this and benefits all learners, not only those with identified SLCN. This includes clear modelling of language, purposeful interaction, predictable routines and an environment that values listening, thinking time and meaningful talk.

SLCN may present in a wide range of ways and with different levels of impact. Some children and young people may have difficulties primarily with understanding spoken language, following instructions or grasping more abstract concepts. Others may find it harder to express themselves clearly, organise their ideas verbally or use appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures. Speech sound difficulties may affect intelligibility, confidence or participation.

Some pupils experience challenges with fluency, such as stammering, which can fluctuate over time and be heightened by pressure, anxiety or increased speaking demands. National guidance highlights the importance of early support and environments that reduce time pressure and promote positive listening attitudes. Not all children and young people who stammer will require targeted intervention; for many, inclusive classroom practice and understanding from adults are key protective factors. Where fluency difficulties persist or impact on participation or wellbeing, timely referral for specialist speech and language assessment may be appropriate, informed by professional judgement and in partnership with families.

Speech, language and communication needs can be temporary or ongoing and may change with age, context or intervention. Pupils often show uneven profiles, with particular strengths alongside areas requiring additional support. For example, a child or young person may contribute thoughtfully to discussion when given time and structure, but struggle in fast-paced whole-class interactions or unfamiliar social situations. Others may communicate confidently with adults while finding peer interaction more challenging or use rehearsed language successfully while finding it harder to adapt language flexibly.

Recognising these patterns supports accurate identification and ensures that support remains proportionate and responsive. Reviewing progress across a range of activities and contexts, and valuing gains in confidence, participation and effective communication, helps determine the most appropriate level of support and ensures that provision builds on strengths as well as addressing need.

## Universal: Speech, Language & Communication

### Descriptors of Need

May experience speech, language and/or communication differences that are noticeable at times and may occasionally affect aspects of learning or social interaction.

#### Speech

- Speech is generally understood by adults and peers
- May show speech sound immaturities that are noticeable in some contexts.
- Speech sound differences may occasionally influence phonics application or spelling e.g., representing sounds as they are produced in speech.

#### Language

- Able to use simple phrases and sentences, drawing on familiar everyday vocabulary to communicate needs, ideas and experiences.
- May find it harder to identify key points in discussions or explanations, particularly when language demands increase.
- May find certain concepts e.g., size, time, shape, position more difficult to understand or use than their peers.
- May use simplified language structures
- Some emerging challenges understanding and using curriculum vocabulary, particularly as subject-specific language increases.

#### Communication

- Listening and attention differences may occasionally impact engagement with tasks or independence.
- Engages in social interaction and learning though this may be more variable in some situations.
- Social interaction skills may be developing; friendships may require adult facilitation at times.
- Behaviour or emotional responses may sometimes reflect underlying communication differences e.g., frustration, withdrawal or reduced confidence.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress is monitored through routine classroom-based assessment, including teacher observation, informal assessment and regular review of progress.</li> <li>• Assessment is embedded within everyday practice and informs responsive teaching across the curriculum.</li> <li>• QFT strategies are reflected in curriculum planning to remove barriers to learning and support participation.</li> <li>• The school uses its existing assessment methodologies to track progress over time.</li> <li>• Planning is responsive and rooted in QFT principles.</li> <li>• QFT and adaptations are consistently implemented to address emerging SLCN.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QFT includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear, consistent classroom routines that support understanding and predictability.</li> <li>- Use of clear, accessible spoken and written language across teaching and interaction.</li> <li>- Instructions that are concise, purposeful and adjusted to reduce unnecessary language load.</li> <li>- Regular modelling of language and communication appropriate to the learning context.</li> <li>- Checking understanding through everyday interaction, questioning and observation.</li> <li>- Whole-school consistency in communication expectations and approaches.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Learning is delivered through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities to listen, talk and interact as part of everyday learning.</li> <li>- Visual, contextual and experiential learning that supports meaning-making.</li> <li>- Repetition and overlearning of key vocabulary and concepts to support retention.</li> <li>- Explicit links between spoken language, written language and learning experiences.</li> <li>- Collaborative learning that enables pupils to communicate and learn alongside peers.</li> <li>- Predictable structures that support attention, engagement and participation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning takes place within the classroom through QFT and adaptive teaching approaches.</li> <li>• Attention given to seating, acoustics and organisation to support listening and participation.</li> <li>• Opportunities for small-group learning are built into everyday classroom routines to support language development and social interaction.</li> <li>• Classroom resources are used flexibly to support inclusive practice and responsive teaching.</li> <li>• Staff understand how to adapt teaching approaches to meet emerging SLCN within everyday practice.</li> <li>• All school staff access regular CPD to build confidence and capacity in meeting diverse learning needs.</li> <li>• No additional adult support is required beyond what is ordinarily available in the classroom.</li> <li>• SENDCO supports whole-school practice, quality assurance and professional learning.</li> </ul> |

## Universal Plus: Speech, Language & Communication

### Descriptors of Need

- Has SLCN that are becoming more apparent and are beginning to affect access to multiple areas of the curriculum and aspects of social and emotional development.
- They engage in learning and social activity, though participation may be less consistent as language and interaction demands increase.

#### Speech

- Speech is usually understood by familiar adults, though additional context may be required at times.
- Speech sound errors are ongoing and are beginning to affect literacy development and peer interaction.
- Reduced clarity of speech may impact confidence or willingness to contribute verbally in some situations.

#### Language

- Language difficulties are ongoing and may be affecting progress across aspects of learning.
- Reliance on everyday vocabulary and simple phrases continues.
- Differences may include:
  - Challenges understanding and using conceptual and curriculum-related language
  - Limited expressive and receptive vocabulary, which may be below expected levels
- Difficulties with language are increasingly noticeable as curriculum demands become more complex.

#### Communication

- Listening and attention difficulties impact engagement, independence and the ability to follow classroom routines.
- Social interaction may be limited; friendships may be difficult to initiate or sustain.
- Communication differences may contribute to emotional or behavioural responses (e.g. frustration, stress or disengagement), particularly in language-heavy or socially demanding situations.

### Assessment & Planning

#### In addition to Universal

- Progress is monitored through routine classroom-based assessment, including teacher observation, informal assessment and regular review of progress.
- Assessment is embedded within everyday practice and informs responsive teaching across the curriculum.
- QFT strategies are reflected in curriculum planning to remove barriers to learning and support participation.
- The school uses its existing assessment methodologies to track progress over time.
- Planning is responsive and rooted in QFT principles.
- QFT and adaptations are consistently implemented to address emerging SLCN.

### Teaching, Learning & Curriculum

#### In addition to Universal

- QFT includes:
  - Clear, consistent classroom routines that support understanding and predictability.
  - Use of clear, accessible spoken and written language across teaching and interaction.
  - Instructions that are concise, purposeful and adjusted to reduce unnecessary language load.
  - Regular modelling of language and communication appropriate to the learning context.
  - Checking understanding through everyday interaction, questioning and observation.
  - Whole-school consistency in communication expectations and approaches.
- Learning is delivered through:
  - Opportunities to listen, talk and interact as part of everyday learning.
  - Visual, contextual and experiential learning that supports meaning-making.
  - Repetition and overlearning of key vocabulary and concepts to support retention.
  - Explicit links between spoken language, written language and learning experiences.
  - Collaborative learning that enables pupils to communicate and learn alongside peers.
  - Predictable structures that support attention, engagement and participation.

### Intervention & Resources

#### In addition to Universal

- Learning takes place within the classroom through QFT and adaptive teaching approaches.
- Attention given to seating, acoustics and organisation to support listening and participation.
- Opportunities for small-group learning are built into everyday classroom routines to support language development and social interaction.
- Classroom resources are used flexibly to support inclusive practice and responsive teaching.
- Staff understand how to adapt teaching approaches to meet emerging SLCN within everyday practice.
- All school staff access regular CPD to build confidence and capacity in meeting diverse learning needs.
- No additional adult support is required beyond what is ordinarily available in the classroom.
- SENDCO supports whole-school practice, quality assurance and professional learning.

## Targeted: Speech, Language & Communication

### Descriptors of Need

- Has ongoing speech, language and/or communication needs that significantly affect access to the curriculum and social-emotional development, particularly in unfamiliar contexts.
- Engagement in learning and social activity may be variable, with increasing difficulty when language demands are high, routines change, or expectations are less familiar.
- May use self-generated strategies to support communication (e.g. relying on routines, rehearsed phrases, avoidance, copying others).
- Has a speech, language and communication profile that may be uneven and does not follow typical developmental patterns.
- Difficulties with understanding and using language may affect attention, listening, and sustained engagement, particularly within whole-class teaching or group discussion.

#### Speech

- Speech may be difficult to understand, including for familiar adults at times, particularly when out of context.
- Speech sound difficulties may limit peer interaction and have an increasing impact on phonics, spelling and literacy.

#### Language

- Language difficulties have a regular impact on learning and progress may be slow over time. Difficulties may include:
  - Spoken and written language that may be limited in sentence structure and vocabulary.
  - Difficulty recounting events and telling stories in sequence.
  - Difficulties understanding instructions, questions and classroom conversations.
  - Challenges with sequencing, predicting and inference, which may affect understanding of cause and consequence and influence behaviour.
  - Poor understanding of abstract language and verbal reasoning.
  - Reliance on non-verbal cues (e.g. gesture, peer modelling) or copying others, which can mask comprehension difficulties.

#### Communication

- May appear passive, distracted or disengaged, particularly during language-heavy teaching or socially demanding situations.
- May display emotional or behavioural responses linked to communication breakdown e.g. frustration, anxiety, withdrawal, stress.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is clear evidence of ongoing monitoring, identification of need and review of previous intervention, used to inform next steps.</li> <li>• Assessment information reflects a graduated response and is used to support decision-making prior to referral to specialist services, with parental consent.</li> <li>• The SENDCo contributes to the assessment process to develop a detailed understanding of the child's speech, language and communication profile.</li> <li>• Reviews consider the impact and evidence base of approaches used when exploring the need for more targeted resources or provision.</li> <li>• Planning identifies individualised targets, with increased focus on structure, consistency and personalisation.</li> </ul> | <b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning takes place within the classroom, with significant adaptation to teaching approaches, groupings and curriculum content to support access and engagement.</li> <li>• Groupings are flexible and reflect current ability, with teaching adapted to reduce language load and support understanding.</li> <li>• Pupils may predominantly work on modified curriculum tasks, with adaptations made to support comprehension and participation.</li> <li>• Adults use clear, concise instructions, everyday vocabulary, repetition and modelling to support processing and understanding.</li> <li>• Understanding is routinely checked and reinforced to support engagement and task completion.</li> <li>• Consideration is given to the transfer and generalisation of skills across lessons, subjects and contexts.           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Literacy tasks are adapted to support access, with targeted focus on vocabulary, comprehension and expressive language.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular, planned small-group and individual interventions are embedded within the school day to address identified speech, language and communication needs.</li> <li>• Interventions are structured, consistent and individualised, with a clear focus on specific targets.</li> <li>• Evidence-based approaches (e.g. Colourful Semantics, Talking Mats) may be used where appropriate to support expressive and receptive language.</li> <li>• The class teacher remains the primary provider of teaching, with additional adult support directed by adapted planning and focused on agreed targets.</li> <li>• Advice from Speech and Language Therapy may be used to inform classroom strategies and intervention approaches.</li> <li>• Staff working directly with pupils have the appropriate training and knowledge to implement strategies and programmes effectively.</li> <li>• Pre- and post-teaching of key vocabulary is provided, with frequent opportunities to practise and apply new language.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted: Speech, Language & Communication

### Descriptors of Need

- Has persistent SLCN that impacts their access to the curriculum, including social-emotional development.
- Their needs affect learning, interaction and participation across contexts particularly where language demands are high or situations are unfamiliar.
- Engagement in learning and social activity is possible, but may be inconsistent and fragile, particularly without high levels of structure and predictability.
- May rely on self-generated strategies to support communication e.g., memorised language, copying peers, avoidance or reliance on routines.
- Has a speech, language and communication profile that does not follow typical developmental patterns and may be uneven across areas of learning.
- Attainment may vary significantly between subjects, reflecting differences in language demand.
- Literacy difficulties may include challenges with writing fluency, reading comprehension and/or spelling.
- A significant speech, language or communication disorder has been identified by a Speech & Language Therapist.

#### Speech

- Speech sound difficulties may make speech difficult to understand, including for familiar listeners, particularly when out of context.
- Speech difficulties have a considerable impact on literacy development and peer relationships.
- Reduced intelligibility may affect confidence, participation and willingness to communicate.

#### Language

- Language difficulties have a persistent and significant impact on learning over time. They may have:
  - Difficulties understanding instructions, questions and classroom conversation.
  - Spoken and written language that is limited in sentence structure and vocabulary.
  - Difficulty recounting events, explaining ideas or telling stories in sequence.
  - Challenges with sequencing, predicting and inference, affecting understanding of cause and consequence and influencing behaviour.
  - Poor understanding of abstract language and verbal reasoning.
  - Reliance on non verbal cues (e.g. gesture, peer modelling) or copying others, which may mask underlying comprehension difficulties.

#### Communication

- Communication difficulties may contribute to behavioural, emotional or social challenges that affect everyday interaction and learning.
- May appear withdrawn, passive or "off task" due to difficulties understanding spoken language or social expectations.
- May find it difficult to initiate or sustain play, peer interaction or group work due to the language and communication demands involved.
- May struggle with conversational skills, including turn-taking, maintaining topics and repairing misunderstandings.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and planning place a significant focus on emotional wellbeing and the social and functional use of speech and language, recognising the impact on learning and participation.</li> <li>• Individual targets are informed by advice from Speech and Language Therapy and/or Specialist Teachers and are embedded consistently across the school day.</li> <li>• Where a diagnosis of Language Disorder or Speech Disorder exists, planning reflects high expectations for academic learning, alongside substantial personalisation to support access.</li> <li>• Planning is increasingly structured and coordinated, ensuring strategies are applied consistently across lessons, staff and contexts.</li> <li>• Whole-school understanding of the pupil's needs is supported through training and professional development e.g., Communication Friendly Schools, SLT-led CPD.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching approaches are highly structured and carefully sequenced to support understanding, engagement and independence.</li> <li>• Multi-sensory learning approaches are used to reinforce understanding and sustain attention.</li> <li>• Tasks are broken into manageable steps, with clear and explicit support at each stage.</li> <li>• The learning environment is language-rich, with labelled resources, visual prompts and interactive displays used to reinforce vocabulary and concepts.</li> <li>• Vocabulary and concept teaching is explicit, structured and contextualised across subjects.</li> <li>• Speech and language goals are embedded throughout the curriculum, not limited to discrete sessions.</li> <li>• Opportunities to practise real-life and functional communication skills are planned and revisited regularly.                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Person-centred approaches are used to strengthen core communication skills across all learning experiences.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily opportunities for individual or small-group work are provided, closely matched to identified speech, language and communication needs.</li> <li>• Specialist approaches are used to support expressive and receptive communication, including support for recording and communication through AAC where appropriate.</li> <li>• The class teacher remains the primary provider of teaching, with planned support from the SENDCo, Specialist Teacher and/or Speech and Language Therapist.</li> <li>• Periods of 1:1 support are delivered by appropriately trained staff to implement agreed strategies and interventions in line with individual targets.</li> <li>• Staff working directly with pupils have specialist training and expertise in supporting children and young people with SLCN.</li> </ul> |

## Specialist: Speech, Language & Communication

### Descriptors of Need

- Has complex and enduring speech, language and communication needs that have a substantial and pervasive impact on all areas of learning, participation and school life.
- Engagement in learning and social activity is highly variable, with increased difficulty in less predictable or language heavy situations.
- May rely on alternative or non spoken methods to support communication, including visual, concrete or experiential means.
- Has a speech, language and communication profile that is uneven and does not follow typical developmental patterns across all areas of learning.
- A significant speech, language or communication disorder has been identified by a Speech & Language Therapist.

#### Speech

- Speech is difficult to understand most of the time, including in familiar contexts.
- Reduced intelligibility has a significant impact on learning, confidence and peer relationships.
- Speech sound difficulties affect participation across lessons and social situations.

#### Language

- Language difficulties have an enduring and substantial impact on learning over time, they:
  - Frequently misunderstand instructions, including simple or familiar ones.
  - Have difficulty processing more than one element of spoken information at a time.
  - Rely heavily on imitation, routines or peer behaviour to determine what is expected.
  - Experience difficulty following classroom routines due to challenges understanding spoken language.
  - Have ongoing difficulties learning, understanding and using everyday, conceptual and curriculum-related vocabulary.
  - Struggle to recount events, explain ideas or tell stories in a coherent sequence.
  - Have difficulties with sequencing, predicting and inference, affecting understanding of cause and consequence and influencing behaviour.
  - Have a poor understanding of abstract language and verbal reasoning.

#### Communication

- Communication difficulties significantly affect the pupil's ability to regulate emotions, manage transitions and/or change.
- Expressive communication may be very limited, unclear or unreliable, significantly affecting the pupil's ability to communicate needs, ideas or emotions and to contribute to learning activities.
- Social interaction may be very restricted, with marked difficulty initiating, sustaining or repairing interaction with peers due to the level of language and communication demand involved.
- May appear withdrawn, distressed or disengaged in response to communication demands, with communication breakdown consistently impacting emotional regulation, confidence and participation.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and planning are closely aligned to advice and targets provided by Speech and Language Therapy and Specialist Teachers, with adjustments made to support access within a mainstream environment where appropriate.</li> <li>• Planning reflects an understanding that Developmental Language Disorder and related speech disorders are persistent and lifelong, and this is embedded within longer-term planning and review.</li> <li>• Where a diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder (with or without a speech sound disorder) exists, planning maintains high expectations for academic achievement, alongside significant personalisation to support access.</li> <li>• Assessment and planning include pastoral considerations, recognising the impact of speech, language and communication needs on emotional wellbeing and social participation.</li> <li>• Whole-school understanding of complex speech, language and communication needs is supported through targeted professional development and training (e.g. Communication Friendly Schools, SLT-led CPD).</li> <li>• Dynamic, responsive planning cycles are essential, with frequent review and adaptation based on pupil progress, wellbeing and multi-agency feedback.</li> <li>• Transition planning is embedded early and coordinated, particularly for key changes, with clear roles, timelines and shared responsibility across agencies and family.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching approaches are highly structured, specialist-informed and consistently applied to support understanding, engagement and participation.</li> <li>• Multi-sensory learning approaches are used routinely to reinforce understanding and sustain engagement.</li> <li>• Tasks are carefully broken into manageable steps, with explicit modelling and structured support at each stage.</li> <li>• The learning environment is intentionally language-rich, using labelled resources, visual prompts and interactive displays to reinforce vocabulary and concepts.</li> <li>• Vocabulary and concept teaching is explicit, systematic and embedded across all curriculum areas.</li> <li>• Speech and language goals are integrated across subjects, rather than confined to discrete sessions.</li> <li>• Opportunities to practise real-life, functional communication skills are planned and embedded within everyday learning.</li> <li>• Person-centred approaches are used to strengthen fundamental communication skills across all aspects of the curriculum. Safe participation in group learning and wider school experiences</li> <li>• Expectations remain ambitious, recognising that progress may be uneven and that consolidation and maintenance are legitimate outcomes.</li> <li>• Life skills curriculum should be personalised and include opportunities for community-based learning, budgeting, travel training, and self-advocacy.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal – Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff implement specialist materials, programmes and approaches under the guidance of Speech and Language Therapy and Specialist Teachers, ensuring consistency and fidelity.</li> <li>• Daily opportunities for individual and small-group work are provided, focused on speech, language and communication development.</li> <li>• Specialist teaching and non-teaching support is available within the classroom and, where appropriate, across the wider school environment.</li> <li>• Specialist staff support mainstream colleagues to plan and deliver inclusive, structured interventions and highly adapted curriculum content.</li> <li>• Provision includes 1:1 adult support, delivered by appropriately trained staff, focused on individual targets and consistent implementation of agreed strategies.</li> <li>• Additional training is provided for mainstream staff to support curriculum modification and inclusive practice.</li> <li>• Resources such as ELKLAN materials are used to strengthen staff understanding and effective delivery of specialist SLCN strategies.</li> <li>• Support is reviewed frequently to ensure it remains appropriate, sustainable and genuinely enabling access to mainstream learning.</li> </ul> |



## Sensory Impairment

Sensory impairment describes difficulties arising from hearing impairment, vision impairment, or a combination of both, and the impact these have on a child or young person's access to learning, communication, independence and participation. Most learning in mainstream settings relies heavily on vision and hearing working together. When access through one or both senses are reduced, barriers may arise that are not immediately visible but have a significant cumulative effect over time.

Hearing impairment and vision impairment are each described within this Framework as distinct areas of need, recognising that the functional impact of sensory loss varies widely depending on factors such as severity, age of identification, consistency of access, listening and visual environments, and associated needs. Inclusive, sensory-aware practice benefits all learners and forms the foundation of effective support for pupils with sensory needs.

Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI), sometimes referred to as dual sensory loss, describes the combined impact of both hearing and vision impairment. MSI is not simply the addition of two separate needs. Even where each sensory impairment may appear mild or manageable in isolation, the combined effect can significantly reduce access to incidental learning, communication, orientation and independence. The impact of MSI is therefore highly individual and must always be understood through functional assessment over time.

Within the SEND In Mainstream Settings Framework, support for children and young people with MSI should be identified and planned by using the Hearing Impairment and Vision Impairment sections together. Practitioners should consider how the interaction between hearing and vision difficulties affects the child or young person's ability to access teaching, participate socially, develop independence and sustain engagement across the school day.

Local Authority responsibilities for sensory support are set out within the Hearing Impairment and Vision Impairment sections of this Framework. These sections describe the role of Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (QToDs), Qualified Teachers of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (QTVIs), and the application of national eligibility frameworks. Where a child or young person has MSI, specialist advice and intervention should be co-ordinated across hearing and vision services, ensuring approaches are aligned, consistent and mutually reinforcing.

The combined sensory impact should be considered explicitly when:

- Determining the appropriate tier of support
- Planning adaptations and interventions
- Reviewing progress and outcomes over time

This approach ensures that children and young people with sensory needs receive proportionate, realistic and coherent support within mainstream provision, while drawing appropriately on specialist expertise where required.



## Hearing Impairment

Hearing impairment describes a range of permanent or enduring hearing differences that can affect how children and young people access spoken language, communication, learning and social interaction. This includes permanent sensorineural deafness, permanent conductive deafness and temporary but enduring conductive hearing loss. Children with hearing impairment are identified through local Audiology and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) services or via the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme. Upon identification and referral to the South Tyneside Hearing Impairment Team is made to ensure timely support for children, families and educational settings.

The impact of hearing impairment varies considerably and cannot be understood by audiological thresholds alone. Functional impact is influenced by factors such as the type and degree of hearing loss, age of identification, consistency of access to sound, listening environments and the communication demands of the setting. As pupils progress through education and learning becomes increasingly language based, the impact of hearing impairment may become more evident, particularly in group situations or less predictable contexts.

Children and young people with hearing impairment may experience differences in language and communication, social interaction, access to learning and emotional wellbeing. Some pupils may appear to cope well in familiar situations while continuing to experience hidden barriers such as listening fatigue or reduced access to incidental learning. Hearing impairment may also co occur with other areas of need, and support planning should take account of the whole child, with reference to other sections of the SEND in Mainstream Settings Framework where appropriate.

The tier descriptors that follow support identification of need over time and should be applied within a graduated response. Movement to higher tiers assumes that inclusive practice and strategies at earlier tiers are securely embedded and reviewed, ensuring that children and young people with hearing impairment receive proportionate and appropriate support within mainstream provision.

# Glossary of Hearing Impairment Types

## *Types of Deafness*

- **Sensorineural deafness:**  
Permanent damage to the inner ear or auditory nerve, affecting access to high-frequency sounds (e.g., consonants).
- **Conductive hearing loss:**  
Sound transmission issues in the outer/middle ear, may be temporary (glue ear/OME) or permanent
- **Mixed hearing loss:**  
A combination of conductive and sensorineural hearing loss.
- **Unilateral hearing loss:**  
Deafness in one ear, ranging from mild to profound.
- **Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSD):**  
Disruption in sound transmission from cochlea to brain.
- **Auditory Processing Disorder:**  
Difficulty interpreting sounds despite normal hearing.

## *Degrees of Deafness*

The British Society of Audiology descriptors are used to define degrees of hearing loss.

These descriptors are based on the average hearing threshold levels at 250, 500, 1000, 2000 and 4000Hz in the better ear (where no response is taken to have a value of 130 dBHL).

- Mild Hearing Loss: Unaided threshold 21-40 dBHL
- Moderate Hearing Loss: Unaided threshold 41-70 dBHL
- Severe Hearing Loss: Unaided threshold 71-95 dBHL
- Profound Hearing Loss: Unaided threshold in excess of 95 dBHL

## *Hearing Impaired Service Provision & Eligibility*

The Hearing Impairment Service includes Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (QToDs) and Specialist Support Staff. The level of support provided to a child are assessed using the NatSIP Eligibility Framework, which considers 10 criteria of need, including:

- Degree of deafness
- Age at diagnosis
- Additional needs (e.g., EAL, safeguarding history, disrupted education)
- Functional impact and communication profile

The NatSIP eligibility framework is holistic guidance in assessing a deaf child's needs across multiple developmental areas impacted by deafness. NatSIP Eligibility framework (<https://www.natsip.org.uk/eligibility-framework/3612-eligibility-framework-for-scoring-support-levels-for-deaf-and-hearing-impaired-children-from-birth-to-the-end-of-f1-document-now-published?highlight=WyJ5b3UiLCJ5b3UnbGwiLCJ5b3UndmUiLCJ5b3UncmUiXQ==>) must be used with families and supporting professionals to integrate a child's needs, progress and requirement for provision to meet their needs. The NatSIP document is available on the Local Offer and the NatSIP website.

## Universal: Hearing Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

Is known to and registered with the HI Service. QToD Support is guided by the NatSIP Eligibility Framework level C3, 'on advice' or an annual support. They may present with:

- Unilateral or bilateral deafness at any level with on-going monitoring by the NHS
- May or may not use a form of personal hearing technology

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed awareness of hearing needs within whole-school and class-based assessment processes as part of routine practice.</li> <li>• Ensure curriculum planning reflects the pupil's current levels of access and achievement, with hearing needs considered within individual support planning where appropriate.</li> <li>• Monitor progress in access to learning, participation and communication, sharing relevant information with the Hearing Impairment Service.</li> <li>• Review and refine strategies in collaboration with families and relevant professionals.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with families to support consistency between home and school.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide assessment and advisory input from a Qualified Teacher of Deaf children and young people (QToD) where appropriate, following referral or a change in the child or young person's needs.</li> <li>• Use the NatSIP Eligibility Framework, in partnership with families and schools, to determine the appropriate level of support.</li> </ul> | <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure inclusive, deaf aware classroom practice, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thoughtful seating to support visual and auditory access.</li> <li>- Careful consideration of lighting, acoustics and management of background noise.</li> <li>- Clear speech, supported by visual cues where appropriate.</li> <li>- Re phrasing or re casting peer contributions to support full access to discussion.</li> <li>- Consistent modelling of deaf aware communication by all adults.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explicitly teach key vocabulary and concepts, sharing this with families to support reinforcement beyond school.</li> <li>• Create a language rich learning environment that supports listening, understanding and communication.</li> <li>• Plan the school day to balance listening demands and reduce the impact of listening fatigue.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide specialist advice on environmental adaptations and communication strategies to support inclusive teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Support workforce development through training, consultation or signposting offered by the Hearing Impairment Service.</li> </ul> | <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure pupils with hearing impairment have full access to the National Curriculum and all aspects of school life.</li> <li>• Promote social inclusion, peer interaction, independence and the development of self advocacy skills within everyday school routines.</li> <li>• All staff working directly with the child or young person have access to Deaf awareness training.</li> <li>• Written advice and strategies issued by a QToD are shared with relevant staff and cascaded year on year.</li> <li>• Deliver provision primarily through class or subject teachers, with reasonable adaptations made as required.</li> <li>• Reasonable adjustments are implemented using existing school resources.</li> <li>• Maintain a communication friendly environment across classrooms and shared spaces.</li> <li>• Deafness is positively reflected within universally available resources (for example, books, images and learning materials).</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide specialist input from the Hearing Impairment Service through Qualified Teachers of Deaf children and young people where appropriate.</li> <li>• Offer guidance on appropriate resource selection, including visual supports, classroom technology and environmental adaptations.</li> </ul> |

## Universal Plus: Hearing Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

QToD Support is guided by the NatSIP Eligibility Framework at level C1 & C2, with frequency determined by individual needs (two or three hours per year). Experience challenges understanding and using verbal and non-verbal communication, particularly in group situations. They may present with:

- Unilateral or Bilateral, permanent or temporary hearing loss with at least annual monitoring by the NHS.
- May use hearing aids issued by NHS Audiology.
- Where hearing technology is issued, this is used consistently.
- Challenges with some areas of development such as listening, attention, concentration, speech clarity, language understanding and use, and class participation may be seen.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate hearing needs explicitly within risk assessments for learning beyond the classroom, ensuring access and consistency are maintained across different environments (e.g. educational visits, PE or swimming).</li> <li>• Ensure forward planning anticipates practical considerations linked to hearing access (for example availability of spare hearing-aid batteries or additional visual support).</li> <li>• Make timely referrals to Speech and Language Therapy or Language and Learning Support where communication or language development requires further assessment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake more detailed specialist assessment where appropriate, which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speech discrimination testing.</li> <li>- Functional listening assessments.</li> <li>- Monitoring of language development over time.</li> <li>- Consideration of assistive listening device (ALD) candidacy.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Monitor hearing aid management, including checks to ensure equipment is functioning optimally.</li> <li>• Gather and share the child or young person's views about their access to learning and school life with families, schools and Audiology services.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use local authority provided assistive listening devices (where available) consistently to maximise access to teaching and learning across lessons.</li> <li>• Apply agreed adaptations more deliberately in language heavy, group based or unfamiliar learning contexts where listening demands are increased.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide specialist advice, guidance and training to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Refinement of environmental adaptations.</li> <li>- Development of more specific communication strategies.</li> <li>- Increased staff confidence and competence in supporting deaf learners.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote growing self awareness and self advocacy, informed by outcomes and priorities identified within the SDCF framework and advice provided by the Qualified Teacher of Deaf children and young people (QToD).</li> <li>• The class or subject teacher remains the primary provider of teaching, with increased coordination and oversight from the SENDCO to support consistency of approach.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing advisory support and written guidance from the Hearing Impairment Service through QToDs.</li> <li>• Offer additional training or consultation for school staff where needs indicate this would strengthen inclusive practice.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted: Hearing Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

QToD Support is guided by the NatSIP Eligibility Framework at B2, with level with frequency determined by individual needs (up to six hours per year). They may present with:

- Bilateral conductive or sensorineural deafness diagnosed by NHS.
- Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSD).
- May use of hearing aids or cochlear implants
- Possibly use ALDs or school soundfield systems.
- Possible delayed language development
- May take longer to process language
- Challenges with listening, attention, concentration, listening fatigue and class participation.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt assessment formats and presentation where necessary to ensure equitable access to learning and assessment outcomes (for example, use of live spoken language rather than recorded audio resources).</li> <li>• Work with the SENDCO to ensure that adaptations are planned, reviewed and adjusted based on impact.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain specialist assessment and monitoring by a Qualified Teacher of Deaf children and young people (QToD).</li> <li>• Set and review targets linked to hearing aid, cochlear implant and assistive listening device (ALD) management.</li> <li>• Introduce functional listening assessments to evaluate real world access to spoken language in classroom and school environments.</li> <li>• Use specialist speech discrimination assessment tools to understand the impact of deafness on learning and communication, with liaison between Audiology, school staff and other professionals as required.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use teaching approaches that more explicitly support access to the curriculum, social emotional development and sustained participation.</li> <li>• Implement enhanced visual support and structured reinforcement strategies, particularly where curriculum content relies heavily on spoken language (for example, scripted delivery of aural content rather than recorded materials).</li> <li>• Ensure consistent, purposeful use of any ALDs or Soundfield systems across relevant lessons.</li> <li>• Provide time limited individual or small group opportunities to support language (including phonics) and listening development, with a clear focus on reducing barriers to classroom access.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where appropriate, observe the child or young person in school to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies and advise on refinements linked specifically to deafness.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply greater adaptation to both the presentation of learning and expected outcomes, informed by assessment and professional advice.</li> <li>• Provide planned opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explanation, clarification and reinforcement of lesson content.</li> <li>- Targeted speaking and listening activities.</li> <li>- Phonics teaching that is adapted to the pupil's individual listening and language profile.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure the class or subject teacher remains the primary provider of teaching, with increased SENDCO oversight to coordinate support.</li> <li>• Deploy teaching assistants with clearer direction and appropriate training to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reinforce lesson content.</li> <li>- Deliver modified learning tasks.</li> <li>- Support language development.</li> <li>- Promote independence and self-advocacy.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure ALDs or Soundfield systems are used consistently and maintained where they support access.</li> <li>• Ensure all staff access Deaf Awareness training provided by the Hearing Impairment Service.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake specialist assessment through the Hearing Impairment Service to evaluate spoken language access and the effectiveness of technology in use.</li> <li>• Facilitate opportunities, where appropriate, for children and young people to meet other deaf peers, coordinated through HI Service staff.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted Plus: Hearing Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

QToD support is guided by the NatSIP Eligibility Framework at B1 & A3 level, with specialist input determined by individual needs (between 10-19 hours per year). Have substantial difficulty understanding, using and adapting communication across different people, settings and situations. They may present with:

- Bilateral permanent deafness more likely at a moderate, severe or profound level in at least one ear.
- Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSD).
- Almost certainly use hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- Likely to use ALD or soundfield system in addition to personal technology
- Likely to have additional language delay associated with deafness
- Some difficulty accessing spoken language even with technology, impacting curriculum access.
- Challenges with attention, concentration, confidence, and class participation
- May display speech clarity difficulties

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum planning reflects a highly personalised support plan, developed collaboratively with the Qualified Teacher of Deaf children and young people (QToD), with clear, measurable outcomes linked to access, participation and progress.</li> <li>• Progress towards agreed outcomes is reviewed jointly with the QToD at least termly, using evidence from learning, communication and engagement across the school day.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide enhanced assessment and monitoring through a QToD.</li> <li>• Use advanced speech and language assessment tools to evaluate access to spoken language.</li> <li>• Apply systematic speech, language and communication assessments designed specifically for deaf children to inform bespoke staff training, precise target-setting and evaluation of impact.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide regular, structured individual and small-group sessions, delivered in addition to class-based teaching, where needed to support access, communication and confidence.</li> <li>• Implement enhanced environmental adaptations in line with professional advice (for example, targeted acoustic treatment or lighting control).</li> <li>• Embed individualised teaching strategies that explicitly support emotional wellbeing, confidence and sustained engagement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe the child or young person within lessons to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning approaches and advise on refinements tailored to deafness.</li> <li>• Offer specialist consultation to support consistent embedding of communication strategies across the curriculum.</li> <li>• Provide guidance to support emotionally responsive teaching approaches where reduced confidence or emotional vulnerability is evident.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply significant adaptation to both the presentation of learning and expected outcomes, based on specialist assessment and advice.</li> <li>• Structure systematic reinforcement of lesson content and language across learning activities.</li> <li>• Deliver targeted phonics and listening interventions aligned to the pupil's assessed needs.</li> <li>• Implement the SDCF with an increased emphasis on identity, confidence and self-advocacy.</li> <li>• Provide access to a quiet space for focused listening, learning and intervention activities.</li> <li>• Consider specialist acoustic assessments and advice to further improve the listening environment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver direct teaching or intervention through a Teacher of the Deaf to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Address gaps in vocabulary and attainment.</li> <li>- Set and review curriculum-linked targets where appropriate.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Where indicated, provide time-limited small-group or 1:1 support through Specialist HI Support Assistants to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote positive deaf identity.</li> <li>- Develop social communication or pragmatic language skills.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maintain high-level support from the Hearing Impairment Service, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specialist assessment.</li> <li>- Targeted staff training and consultation.</li> <li>- Ongoing review of assistive technology use and impact.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

## Specialist: Hearing Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

Support is guided by the NatSIP Eligibility Framework at levels A1 or A2, with intensive, multi-disciplinary input and specialist provision. QToD support is at weekly or multi-weekly level. They may present with:

- Bilateral severe/profound permanent hearing loss or a late diagnosis at a moderate/severe level.
- Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSD).
- Most likely to use cochlear implants or high-power hearing aids, and ALD, and possible school purchased technology (pass around mics and soundfield).
- May have significant language delay and communication difficulties, often requiring BSL, SSE, or augmentative communication.
- Speech clarity is very likely to be affected where a child uses speech as a communication mode.
- Social and emotional development may be impacted due to communication barriers.
- Be working significantly below age expected in many areas of the curriculum.
- Additional learning needs not directly related to hearing loss.
- May have significant difficulty accessing spoken language and curriculum without intensive specialist intervention.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure curriculum planning is highly individualised and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Closely tracks achievement levels over time.</li> <li>- Includes short-term, specific and measurable outcomes.</li> <li>- Is developed collaboratively with the Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD) and other relevant professionals.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review progress towards agreed outcomes at least half-terminly with the QToD, ensuring assessment draws on evidence of access, engagement, learning and wellbeing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the QToD leads assessment and target-setting linked to the four strands of the SDCF, in partnership with the school and family. This must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication, language and literacy.</li> <li>- Deaf identity.</li> <li>- Access to sound.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coordinate involvement of education and non-education professionals where appropriate to ensure a holistic understanding of need (for example specialist mental health services in collaboration with families and schools).</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual communication approaches are embedded throughout teaching and learning where required, including use of BSL or SSE to support access and understanding.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide specialist consultation to support the consistent embedding of visual communication approaches, including BSL or SSE, across the curriculum.</li> <li>• Support school staff to implement emotionally responsive teaching approaches where reduced confidence, anxiety or emotional wellbeing needs are impacting learning and participation.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adapted provision is continually informed by ongoing specialist assessment, with teaching and intervention adjusted responsively over time.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide timetabled, direct teaching input from the QToD, determined by NatSIP eligibility, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reinforce lesson content.</li> <li>- Deliver modified curriculum tasks.</li> <li>- Support language development.</li> <li>- Deliver interventions linked to the four areas of the SDCF across the school year.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coordinate access to deaf adults and/or peer groups to support identity development, emotional wellbeing and communication.</li> </ul> |



# Vision Impairment

Vision impairment describes a range of permanent or enduring visual difficulties that can affect how children and young people access learning, information and their wider environment. This includes conditions impacting visual acuity, visual fields, contrast sensitivity or visual processing. Children and young people may be identified through health services, education settings or family concerns and are supported through referral to the Local Authority Vision Impairment Service.

The impact of vision impairment cannot be understood by clinical diagnosis alone. Functional impact varies depending on the nature of the visual difficulty, age of identification, stability or progression of the condition, familiarity with environments and the visual demands placed on the child or young person within their setting. As curriculum content becomes more visually complex and expectations increase, the impact of vision impairment may become more apparent, particularly where information is presented visually, incidentally or at distance.

Before considering the Vision Impairment descriptors, it is important to understand how the child or young person accesses learning materials, navigates their environment and participates in classroom routines and social activities. Inclusive, vision aware practice supports access for pupils with vision impairment and benefits the wider cohort through clearer presentation, thoughtful organisation and reduced visual barriers. Children and young people with vision impairment may experience differences in access to learning, independence, social interaction and emotional wellbeing. Some pupils may appear to manage well in familiar contexts while continuing to experience hidden barriers such as visual fatigue, reduced access to incidental learning or increased effort to maintain attention. Vision impairment may co occur with other areas of need, and planning should take account of the whole child or young person, with reference to other sections of this Framework where appropriate.

## Vision Impaired Service

The Vision Impairment Service supports children and young people with vision impairment to access learning, develop independence and participate fully within mainstream settings through a graduated, needs led approach. The service works in partnership with families, educational settings and health professionals to build understanding of functional vision and to support inclusive practice over time.

All children and young people referred to the Vision Impairment Service receive an initial assessment led by a Qualified Teacher of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment (QTVI). This assessment focuses on understanding how vision impairment impacts access to learning, communication, independence and participation within the child or young person's everyday environment. It includes observation within the learning setting and draws on input from the child or young person, their family, education staff and relevant health professionals. Assessment and service involvement are informed by the NatSIP Eligibility Framework to support consistency, transparency and proportionality.

Following assessment, the Vision Impairment Service provides advice, guidance and specialist input at a level matched to the child or young person's needs. This may include support to develop inclusive, vision aware practice; targeted monitoring and review as demands increase or needs change; and more specialist teaching or habilitation input where vision impairment presents a significant and ongoing barrier to access, independence and participation within mainstream provision. Service involvement is responsive and evolves over time, recognising that the impact of vision impairment may change as children grow, curriculum demands increase, or visual conditions fluctuate or progress. The Vision Impairment Service plays a key role in supporting transitions between phases of education and in helping settings plan proactively to ensure continuity of access and support.

- **Universal:** The Vision Impairment Service provides a universal offer to all newly referred children and young people to ensure early identification, consistent understanding of need and proportionate support within mainstream provision.
- **Targeted:** This level of service involvement applies where a child or young person with vision impairment requires more focused support and monitoring to maintain access and participation within mainstream settings.
- **Specialist:** This level of service involvement applies where vision impairment presents a significant, ongoing barrier to access, independence and participation despite previously embedded support.

## Universal: Vision Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

Has a mild vision impairment, with best-corrected distance vision typically around 6/12, meaning they may see clearly at approximately 2 metres what peers with typical vision can see at 6 metres.

- May experience reduced access to visual information presented at distance, particularly where information contains fine detail (e.g., board work, displays, demonstrations).
- May experience difficulty sustaining near visual tasks (reading, scanning, copying, detailed visual work), with visual fatigue or reduced stamina over time.
- May require additional time to process, locate and interpret visual information, particularly when tasks are visually complex or time limited.
- May present with mild functional visual processing differences, such as early indicators of CVI, visual field variation or nystagmus, which can affect tracking, visual attention, scanning and interpretation of visual information.
- Concentration and engagement may be variable in visually demanding situations, particularly across longer periods of sustained visual effort.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is embedded within whole-school and classroom-based assessment processes, with attention to access, engagement and impact for visually demanding tasks.</li> <li>• The Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) report is shared with all relevant staff and used to inform day-to-day planning.</li> <li>• Reasonable adjustments are implemented and reviewed routinely through normal school monitoring and review processes.</li> <li>• Curriculum planning reflects the pupil's current levels of achievement and includes personalised targets informed by local authority guidance where appropriate.</li> <li>• Families are engaged to support consistency and shared understanding of what helps the pupil access learning effectively.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist assessment is conducted and monitored by a Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI), with frequency guided by the NatSIP Support Allocation Matrix.</li> <li>• A Vision Impairment report or "passport" is produced and shared with the school, with clear, actionable recommendations.</li> <li>• The service may support planning at key points of transition (e.g., between year groups/settings) to maintain continuity of access.</li> </ul> | <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality First Teaching includes intentional planning for visual access, particularly where learning relies on distance viewing, copying, scanning or detailed visual material.</li> <li>• The classroom environment is organised to support visual access, including seating/positioning, lighting and thoughtful visual layout.</li> <li>• Strategies advised by the QTVI are implemented consistently (for example, clear presentation of board content and effective use of contrast).</li> <li>• Teaching includes explanation, clarification and reinforcement of key concepts and vocabulary to support curriculum access and participation</li> <li>• Brief, structured reinforcement is built into everyday classroom routines, where helpful, to clarify concepts and support access through normal teaching and learning activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Vision Impairment Service provides advice to support teachers to refine teaching approaches and curriculum access strategies in line with the child's functional vision profile.</li> </ul> | <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The class/subject teacher remains the primary provider of teaching, with adaptations embedded in everyday practice.</li> <li>• Learning materials are adapted to ensure clarity and accessibility (e.g., enlarged/clear print, high-contrast presentation, accessible formatting) in line with QTVI advice.</li> <li>• Non-specialist aids and equipment are used where appropriate to support access within mainstream classrooms.</li> <li>• Regular contact is maintained with the QTVI to review effectiveness of strategies and respond to changes in access needs.</li> <li>• May benefit from larger print (N14 or above) and enhanced visual materials to support comfortable and sustained reading and engagement with visual content.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist low vision aids/equipment may be provided where indicated through assessment.</li> <li>• Training and consultation are provided by the QTVI to strengthen staff confidence and consistency of approach.</li> <li>• Where appropriate, additional guidance may be aligned with NatSIP learner outcome frameworks to support consistent focus on access and independence.</li> </ul> |

## Universal Plus: Vision Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

- Has a mild to moderate vision impairment, with best-corrected distance vision typically in the range 6/19–6/24, meaning they may see clearly at approximately 1.5 metres what peers with typical vision can see at 6 metres.
- Experiences reduced access to visual information containing fine detail, particularly at distance (for example, board work, demonstrations or displays).
- May show mild to moderate functional visual processing differences, including those associated with cerebral visual impairment (CVI), visual field variation or nystagmus, affecting tracking, scanning or visual interpretation.
- May demonstrate increased visual fatigue and find it harder to sustain concentration during visually demanding tasks.
- May rely on self-developed compensatory strategies (e.g. adjusting head or eye position, moving closer to materials) to improve visual clarity.
- May make occasional errors when copying from the board or other visual sources.
- Without additional access considerations, may find it harder than peers to reliably access fine detail at distance, even when positioned near the front of the classroom.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively monitor progress and engagement in relation to visual access, ensuring adjustments remain effective and responsive as curriculum demands increase.</li> <li>• Planning continues to reflect individual levels of achievement and includes personalised targets, informed by Local Authority guidance and professional advice.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QTVI-led assessment may indicate the need for elements of a specialist VI curriculum, particularly where standard universal adaptations alone are insufficient.</li> <li>• Support settings with intervention planning focused on developing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visual efficiency.</li> <li>- Effective use of low-vision aids.</li> <li>- Access to assistive technology, where appropriate.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils remain fully included in class, with structured opportunities for collaborative or small-group learning where this supports access and confidence.</li> <li>• Teaching approaches incorporate purposeful use of ICT tools to support visual access (for example typing, keyboard shortcuts or digital navigation strategies where appropriate).</li> <li>• Continued emphasis on explicit explanation, clarification and reinforcement of lesson content and key language to support access to learning and social-emotional participation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice and guidance to support adaptation of teaching approaches and curriculum access where increased visual demands are identified.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time-limited, planned individual or small-group support is used where necessary to reinforce learning, reduce visual fatigue and build confidence.</li> <li>• Pupils are supported to develop additional ICT and access skills tailored to their individual needs and preferences to enable greater curriculum independence.</li> <li>• Learning materials are selected and adapted for clarity and accessibility, including use of well-contrasted resources and appropriately enlarged formats.</li> <li>• Technology is used deliberately to increase access, with time allocated to ensure pupils are confident and effective in its use.</li> <li>• May benefit from larger print formats (N18 or above) and visually accessible resources.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and consultation from the QTVI to support staff confidence in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of equipment and low-vision aids.</li> <li>- ICT access strategies.</li> <li>- Developing independence through technology.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Habilitation or mobility input may be provided where appropriate to support safe movement, orientation and independence within the school environment.</li> <li>• Additional guidance may be offered in line with frameworks such as NatSIP's 8 Learner Outcomes, where elements of specialist curriculum access are required.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted: Vision Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

- Has a moderate vision impairment, with best-corrected distance vision typically around 6/36, meaning visual information at distance is significantly less clear than for peers with typical vision.
- Experiences consistent difficulty accessing fine visual detail at distance, which has a noticeable impact on access to teaching and learning activities that rely on board work, displays or demonstrations.
- May present with moderate to significant functional visual processing differences, including those associated with cerebral visual impairment (CVI), visual field loss or nystagmus, affecting visual tracking, scanning, discrimination and interpretation.
- Shows reduced visual stamina, with sustained visual attention becoming increasingly difficult during tasks with high visual demand.
- Reliably demonstrates compensatory visual behaviours (e.g. altered head or eye position, reduced working distance) to maximise clarity.
- Makes frequent errors when transferring visual information from one source to another, particularly where information is presented visually at distance.
- May experience difficulty coordinating visual and motor information, which can affect accuracy and efficiency when completing visually guided tasks.
- The combined impact of reduced acuity and visual processing differences results in slower and less efficient access to visual information, particularly as task complexity increases.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to monitor progress, engagement and independence in relation to visual access, using evidence from classroom activity across subjects and contexts.</li> <li>• Planning is informed by current functional visual performance and anticipates change where vision may fluctuate or where CVI-related behaviours are evident.</li> <li>• Curriculum planning reflects current achievement levels and includes clearly defined, personalised support targets, aligned with Local Authority advice.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QTVI-led assessment may identify the need for elements of a specialist VI curriculum, particularly where visual needs are complex, evolving or have a sustained impact on learning.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils remain fully included in mainstream classrooms, with planned small-group and individual teaching opportunities used to support access, participation and confidence where needed.</li> <li>• Teaching approaches explicitly account for increased visual demand, with continued emphasis on clear explanation, clarification and reinforcement of learning and key language.</li> <li>• Visual complexity within lessons (e.g. diagrams, graphs, images, layouts) is intentionally reduced or adapted to meet the pupil's visual profile.</li> <li>• ICT and alternative access methods form a core part of teaching and learning to reduce reliance on distance vision.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authority-led interventions may be introduced, informed by frameworks such as NatSIP's 8 Learner Outcomes, where curriculum access requires more specialist adaptation.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning materials are consistently selected and adapted for clarity and accessibility, with attention to contrast, layout and appropriate enlargement.</li> <li>• Large print or adapted materials are sourced where required to ensure reliable curriculum access.</li> <li>• Additional adult support may be deployed in a targeted way to promote independence and success, with the class or subject teacher retaining responsibility for learning.</li> <li>• Digital tools and technology are used routinely to support recording, access to information and task completion.</li> <li>• Benefits from print sizes in the range of N18-N24 and may require differentiated and modified materials to support access.</li> <li>• Large print materials should be sourced from external providers e.g., RNIB Bookshare, The National Accessible Library or Customeyes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and consultation from the QTVI to support staff in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adapting visual materials.</li> <li>- Modifying diagrams, graphs and images.</li> <li>- Providing captions and alternative representations of visual content.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ongoing advice to refine use of resources and strategies as visual demands increase or change.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted Plus: Vision Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

- Has significantly reduced distance acuity, typically worse than 6/36 and up to 6/60 or below, meaning visual information at distance is extremely difficult to access and visual detail is markedly reduced.
- Experiences significant difficulty identifying people, objects and information at distance, which significantly impacts access to whole-class teaching, demonstrations and shared visual material.
- Has significantly reduced near visual acuity, with fine visual detail becoming increasingly difficult to resolve, particularly as task complexity or visual density increases.
- May present with functional severe vision loss arising from factors such as restricted visual fields, nystagmus or other ocular conditions, even where acuity alone does not fully explain impact.
- Visual input is slow, effortful and unreliable, resulting in reduced visual efficiency and increased fatigue during visually demanding tasks.
- Makes persistent errors when interpreting or transferring visual information, particularly where information is dense, presented visually, or requires coordination of vision and motor output.
- The cumulative impact of reduced acuity and functional visual factors results in substantial and ongoing barriers to independent access, accuracy and pace of learning when relying on vision alone.
- Demonstrates variable visual performance, which may appear stronger in familiar or structured situations but fluctuate across the day or in changing environments.
- A diagnosis of Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) made by an ophthalmologist may have been made, with a highly individual profile of strengths and challenges.
- Experiences differences in visual information processing, which may involve the dorsal stream, ventral stream, or both, affecting how visual input is interpreted rather than visual acuity alone.
- Dorsal stream processing differences may affect:
  - Visual tracking of moving objects.
  - Visual scanning and reading fluency.
  - Managing tasks requiring simultaneous visual and auditory attention.
- Ventral stream processing differences may affect:
  - Recognition of familiar faces or objects.
  - Way-finding and understanding routes or environments.
  - Tolerance of visual clutter or busy visual scenes.
  - Access to information presented in the lower visual field.
- Visual attention, processing efficiency and endurance may vary significantly, particularly in visually complex or unpredictable settings.
- The cumulative impact of CVI can result in inconsistent access to visual information, with performance differing markedly depending on environment, task demands and familiarity.

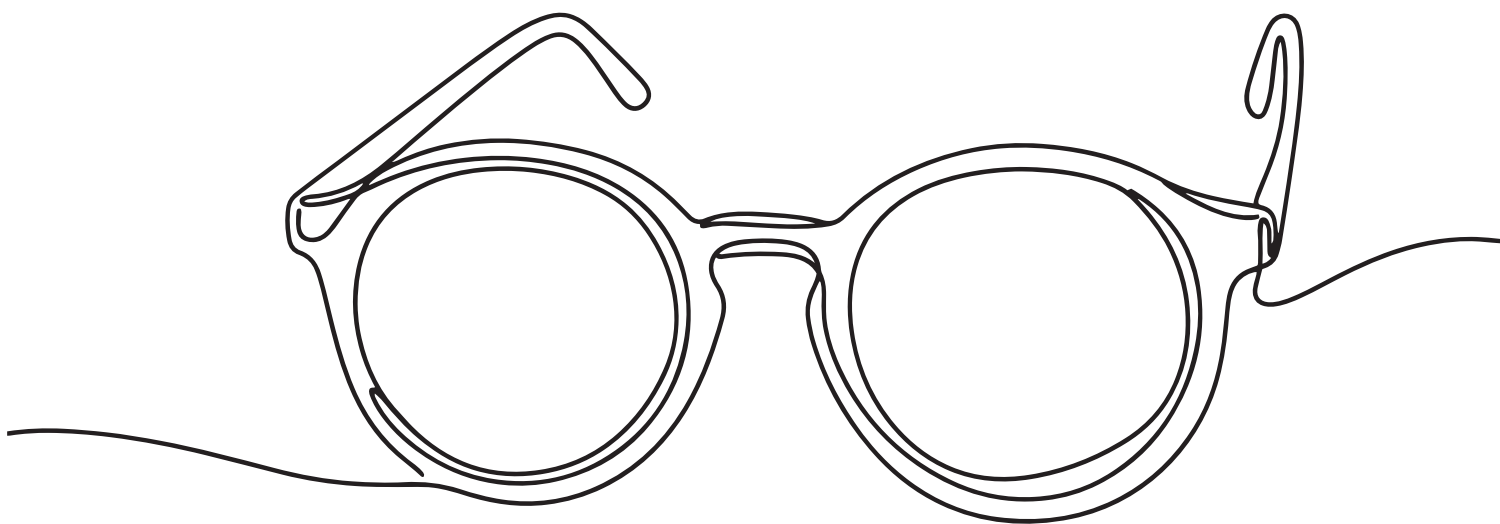
| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum planning reflects highly individualised achievement profiles, with clearly defined, measurable outcomes informed by ongoing assessment of functional vision.</li> <li>• Planning is responsive to patterns of fluctuation in visual access and anticipates change where CVI-related factors impact performance across contexts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QTVI-led assessment identifies the need for a specialist vision impairment curriculum, with particular attention to CVI-specific access profiles.</li> <li>• Support intervention planning focused on developing visual efficiency and compensatory approaches tailored to the individual's CVI profile.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils remain fully included in mainstream classrooms, with regular, planned small-group and individual teaching opportunities used to secure access, participation and confidence.</li> <li>• Teaching approaches are deliberately structured to support:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curriculum access.</li> <li>- Social-emotional participation.</li> <li>- Sustained engagement across the school day.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ICT strategies are embedded as a core means of access, including use of accessibility features where appropriate.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide specialist consultation to support:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Embedding CVI-informed teaching approaches across subjects.</li> <li>- Aligning curriculum delivery to functional visual access, not assumed acuity.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of ICT and access skills remains a priority, tailored to the pupil's visual processing profile and preferred learning styles.</li> <li>• Visual materials, including diagrams, graphs and images, are systematically modified to reduce visual complexity and maximise clarity.</li> <li>• Access to low stimulus or visually calm spaces is planned where this supports sustained engagement and reduces visual fatigue.</li> <li>• May benefit from print larger than N36 and materials will require significant differentiation and modification.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LA-led interventions may include structured trials of compensatory approaches, informed by NatSIP's 8 Learner Outcomes.</li> <li>• Training and consultation from the QTVI to support:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CVI-specific adaptations.</li> <li>- Effective modification of visual materials.</li> <li>- Staff understanding of fluctuating visual access and fatigue.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

## Specialist: Vision Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

- Has a severe or profound vision impairment, with functional vision that is no longer sufficient to reliably access learning through print alone.
- May have experienced a significant deterioration in vision or a later onset of sight loss, requiring substantial adjustment to how learning is accessed.
- Visual access through print is no longer efficient, sustainable or accurate, even with enlarged formats, due to reduced acuity, visual field loss or other functional visual limitations.
- Relies increasingly on non-visual or reduced-vision methods of accessing information, including tactile, auditory and technological routes.
- May be registered Severely Sight Impaired (SSI) and developing skills in tactile literacy, including Braille or other sensory-based systems.
- May be transitioning from print to Braille, or functioning as a dual-media learner, with access needs varying by task, subject and context.
- Visual fatigue and processing demands significantly affect stamina, consistency and independence, particularly across a full school day.
- Access to learning requires high levels of structure, predictability and alternative pathways, with vision no longer the primary or most reliable means of access.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning reflects a highly individualised access profile, with outcomes focused on access, independence, communication and participation rather than solely visual attainment.</li> <li>• Curriculum planning is informed by ongoing review of functional vision, tactile skills and access stamina, recognising that needs may continue to evolve.</li> <li>• Targets reflect the pupil's primary learning media (e.g. tactile, auditory, technological), with realistic progression routes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QTVI leads and coordinates specialist vision assessment, confirming the requirement for a specialist VI curriculum.</li> <li>• Assessment and planning are informed by timely review of access modality, particularly during periods of transition (e.g. print &gt; Braille).</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching approaches are structured to ensure access through non-visual and reduced-vision learning routes.</li> <li>• Curriculum delivery prioritises clarity, sequencing, repetition and alternative representations of learning.</li> <li>• Teaching explicitly supports confidence, self-advocacy and emotional wellbeing as pupils adjust to significant changes in access.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide specialist consultation to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transition to tactile or Braille-based learning.</li> <li>- Consistent delivery of a specialist VI curriculum across subjects.</li> <li>- Staff understanding of progressive sight loss and its educational impact.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access arrangements reflect the pupil's primary learning medium, including consistent use of tactile, auditory and technological approaches.</li> <li>• Increased additional adult support is planned and structured to promote independence, safety and access, not to replace learning ownership, with the class/subject teacher retaining responsibility.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision and leadership of Braille literacy development, led by the QTVI, across curriculum areas where Braille is the primary or emerging medium.</li> <li>• Ongoing training and consultation for school staff to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tactile and Braille access.</li> <li>- Assistive technology.</li> <li>- Independence and orientation skills.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coordination of specialist VI support staff where required to sustain access, independence and wellbeing within mainstream settings.</li> </ul> |



## Multi-Sensory Impairment

Multi-sensory impairment (MSI) describes the combined impact of both hearing and vision differences on a child or young person's access to learning, communication and participation. MSI may range from mild to profound, and the combined effect of both sensory needs can significantly reduce access to incidental learning, social interaction and environmental information. Children and young people with MSI may be identified through health services, education settings or family concerns, with support coordinated across the Hearing Impairment and Vision Impairment services.

The impact of MSI cannot be understood by considering hearing and vision independently. Functional impact is shaped by the interaction between both sensory modalities, alongside factors such as the degree of loss, age of identification, consistency of sensory access, communication approaches and the demands of the learning environment. Even where individual sensory differences appear mild, the combined impact can result in increased effort to access learning, reduced access to incidental information and greater reliance on structured support. As learning becomes more complex and less contextualised, these barriers may become more pronounced, particularly within group situations, unfamiliar environments and less predictable contexts.

Children and young people with MSI may experience differences in communication, access to learning, independence and social interaction. Some pupils may appear to manage well in familiar or structured situations, while continuing to experience cumulative barriers such as fatigue, reduced participation or limited access to shared learning experiences. MSI may co-occur with other areas of need, and planning should take account of the whole child or young person, drawing on relevant sections of this Framework where appropriate.

All staff working with children and young people with MSI must implement the combined strategies and approaches outlined within both the Hearing Impairment and Vision Impairment sections of this Framework. Planning, teaching, communication approaches, environmental adaptations and resource selection must reflect the interaction between both sensory needs, rather than addressing each in isolation. Effective practice ensures that access is consistent, cumulative and embedded across all aspects of the school day, supporting independence, engagement and meaningful participation.

Children and young people with MSI will typically require support at Targeted level or above due to the combined and compounding nature of their needs. For this reason, the descriptors within this section begin at Targeted and follow a graduated response from this point. Movement between tiers should be informed by evidence over time, ensuring that support remains proportionate, responsive and aligned to the child or young person's functional needs.

The tier descriptors that follow support identification of need over time and should be applied alongside the Hearing Impairment and Vision Impairment sections of this Framework. Consideration must be given to the combined sensory impact when determining tier, planning provision and reviewing progress to ensure a coherent and inclusive approach to support.



## Targeted: Multi-Sensory Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

Has mild multi-sensory impairment that is typically non-progressive, with a clear impact on access to learning, communication and participation across a range of contexts. Needs are consistent and require regular support. They may:

- Use hearing aids and/or low vision aids to access learning, with increasing consistency
- Experience difficulty accessing incidental learning, particularly where information is presented through both auditory and visual channels
- Have a slower pace of working, with emerging compensatory strategies
- Experience difficulties with listening, attention and concentration, particularly in visually or acoustically complex environments
- Have language and communication broadly in line with developmental expectations when appropriate support is in place
- Experience challenges understanding and using verbal and non-verbal communication, particularly within group situations
- Require low-level but regular support to manage equipment and apply access strategies
- Show increasing reliance on support to maintain engagement, participation and confidence across the school day
- Have emerging difficulties with independence and social interaction linked to access needs
- May have additional learning needs
- May have associated conditions, including Auditory Processing Disorder, Auditory Neuropathy or Cerebral Visual Impairment

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  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| <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is embedded within whole-school and classroom-based processes, with adaptation to presentation reflecting the pupil's combined sensory profile and access needs.</li> <li>• Assessment practice takes account of the impact of dual sensory impairment on incidental learning, communication and pace of processing.</li> <li>• Reasonable adjustments are implemented consistently and monitored to ensure effective access across learning contexts, including formal assessments and examinations.</li> <li>• Joint vision and hearing impairment (VI/HI) reports are shared with all relevant staff and used to inform planning and review.</li> <li>• Curriculum planning reflects current levels of achievement and includes personalised support targets informed by Local Authority guidance, with explicit consideration of sensory access needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and monitoring are undertaken jointly by the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Qualified Teacher of the Deaf, with frequency guided by the NatSIP Support Allocation Matrix.</li> <li>• A joint VI/HI report is produced and shared with the setting, including detailed and tailored recommendations to support access, communication and independence.</li> <li>• Advice is provided to support detailed planning, including the development of targeted intervention and support at key transition points.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is delivered within the mainstream classroom with consistent implementation of recommended reasonable adjustments and increased adaptation to support access.</li> <li>• Teaching approaches are adapted to support access to both auditory and visual information, recognising the impact of dual sensory impairment on processing, attention and engagement.</li> <li>• Classroom environments are consistently optimised, including attention to seating, lighting, visual layout and acoustics, with increased use of specialist or CVI-informed approaches where appropriate.</li> <li>• Additional time is routinely provided to support processing, task completion and sustained engagement with learning.</li> <li>• Teaching includes frequent opportunities for explanation, clarification and reinforcement of key concepts and language to address gaps in incidental learning.</li> <li>• Curriculum delivery is adapted to manage pace and cognitive load, including reducing task demand where appropriate to maintain meaningful engagement alongside peers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice is provided by the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Qualified Teacher of the Deaf to support the development of more specialised teaching strategies and curriculum adaptations.</li> <li>• Guidance is provided to support staff in adapting teaching to reduce cognitive load and support access to combined auditory and visual information.</li> <li>• Support is provided to develop staff understanding of the impact of multisensory impairment on communication, incidental learning and independence, including modelling or co-working where appropriate</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision is led by the class or subject teacher, with additional staff deployed regularly to provide targeted support for explanation, clarification and reinforcement, and to accommodate a slower pace of learning.</li> <li>• Smaller group or individual teaching is delivered within quieter environments to support preview, overlearning and consolidation of key concepts.</li> <li>• Access to quieter spaces is provided to facilitate regular 1:1 and small group teaching, including opportunities for pre-teaching, rehearsal and consolidation.</li> <li>• Pupils are supported to use low vision aids, hearing aids, radio aids and assistive technology as appropriate, with increasing structure to support consistent and effective use.</li> <li>• A range of adapted materials is used to support access, including modified print, auditory supports, tactile resources and other sensory-adapted approaches.</li> <li>• Resources and support are structured to promote engagement, communication and increasing independence over time.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice and guidance are provided to support the selection and use of appropriate strategies and resources.</li> <li>• Training may be offered by specialist services to develop staff confidence and understanding of sensory needs.</li> <li>• Low-level or introductory equipment may be recommended where appropriate to support access to learning.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted Plus: Multi-Sensory Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

Has moderate multi-sensory impairment with a significant impact on access to learning, communication and independence across a range of contexts. Needs are persistent and require structured support. They may:

- Have a non-progressive condition
- Use hearing aids, radio aids and/or low vision aids to access learning, with increasing reliance on these
- Experience persistent difficulty accessing incidental learning, including spoken, signed and visual communication
- Have language delay associated with multi-sensory impairment
- Have a slower pace of learning and require frequent reinforcement and repetition to secure understanding
- Experience difficulties with attention, concentration and sustained engagement, particularly in complex or unfamiliar environments
- Show increasing reliance on adult support to access learning, participate in social interaction and develop independence
- Have difficulty generalising learning and transferring skills across different contexts
- Experience challenges developing social skills and confidence due to barriers in communication and interaction
- Require structured support to use equipment and apply access strategies consistently and effectively
- May have additional learning needs
- May have associated conditions, including Auditory Processing Disorder, Auditory Neuropathy or Cerebral Visual Impairment

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is embedded within whole-school and classroom-based processes, with significant adaptation to presentation reflecting the pupil's combined sensory profile and access needs.</li> <li>• Assessment takes account of the impact of severe or profound multi-sensory impairment on communication, incidental learning, attention and pace of learning.</li> <li>• Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements are implemented consistently, including for statutory assessments and examinations.</li> <li>• Joint vision and hearing impairment (VI/HI) advice and reports are shared with all relevant staff and used to inform practice across the school day.</li> <li>• Curriculum planning reflects current levels of achievement and is directly aligned to outcomes, with clearly defined, personalised targets informed by Local Authority advice.</li> <li>• Planning reflects the need for consistent, structured approaches to support communication, independence, access and generalisation of skills across contexts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment and monitoring are undertaken jointly by the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Qualified Teacher of the Deaf, with input feeding into ongoing review and planning.</li> <li>• A joint VI/HI advice report is produced and shared with the setting, providing detailed, specialist recommendations to support access, communication, independence and curriculum engagement.</li> <li>• Provision and intervention planning are developed in collaboration with the setting, including programmes focused on access skills, communication and independence.</li> <li>• Multi-agency assessment and planning are coordinated where appropriate to ensure a holistic understanding of need.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is highly adapted and structured, with consistent implementation of specialist recommendations to support access to learning across the school day.</li> <li>• Teaching approaches are tailored to support access through the most effective sensory channels, including auditory, visual and tactile methods as appropriate.</li> <li>• Pupils are supported through structured, repetitive and experiential approaches to learning, recognising the need for reinforcement and overlearning to secure understanding and generalisation.</li> <li>• Significant adaptation to the curriculum is in place, including modification of content, pacing and expectations to support meaningful engagement and progress.</li> <li>• Teaching is delivered within environments that minimise sensory barriers, including careful attention to lighting, acoustics and visual complexity.</li> <li>• Learning experiences include tactile, real object and context-based approaches, alongside opportunities to develop communication through appropriate systems (e.g. tactile signing, visual or adapted communication methods).</li> <li>• Pupils are supported to develop independence, orientation and life skills through structured teaching approaches embedded across the curriculum.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist advice and support are provided by the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Qualified Teacher of the Deaf to develop and refine highly adapted teaching approaches.</li> <li>• Direct involvement may include modelling, co-working and guiding staff in the use of specialist strategies, communication approaches and curriculum adaptations.</li> <li>• Support is provided to develop staff understanding of the impact of severe multi-sensory impairment on learning, communication and independence.</li> <li>• Multi-agency input may contribute to curriculum planning and delivery, including communication, mobility and independence programmes.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision is delivered through a highly structured approach, with MSI-trained staff deployed regularly to provide consistent, targeted support across the school day.</li> <li>• Additional staff support is integral to enabling access to learning,</li> <li>• communication and social interaction, and reflects the pupil's level of dependency.</li> <li>• Access to quiet, low-stimulation environments is provided to support 1:1 and small group teaching, including opportunities for pre-teaching, rehearsal and consolidation.</li> <li>• Pupils are supported to use specialist equipment and assistive technology consistently, including low vision aids, hearing aids, radio aids and communication systems.</li> <li>• A wide range of adapted resources is used to support access, including modified print, auditory supports, tactile materials and Braille where appropriate.</li> <li>• Resources and staffing are organised to support the development of independence, while recognising the need for ongoing adult facilitation.</li> <li>• Daily, planned opportunities for 1:1 and small group teaching are embedded to support communication, concept development and social interaction.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist equipment and assistive technology are provided in line with assessed need, including resources to support visual, auditory and tactile access.</li> <li>• Training is delivered by the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Qualified Teacher of the Deaf to support staff expertise in implementing specialist strategies and using equipment effectively.</li> <li>• Ongoing specialist involvement is maintained to monitor progress, review provision and adjust approaches in response to changing need.</li> <li>• Access to a wider multi-agency team is facilitated where required, including Qualified Habilitation Specialists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and Educational Psychologists.</li> </ul> |

## Specialist: Multi-Sensory Impairment

### Descriptors of Need

Has severe or profound multi-sensory impairment with a significant and pervasive impact on access to learning, communication and independence. Needs are evident across all contexts. They may:

- Use hearing aids, radio aids and/or low vision aids as a primary means of accessing learning
- Experience significant difficulty accessing incidental learning, including spoken, signed and visual communication
- Have delayed development across areas of learning, including communication, independence and social development, and a significantly slower pace of learning
- Have significant difficulty generalising learning and transferring skills across contexts
- Require adapted communication approaches and highly structured, tactile or experiential learning methods
- Have significant difficulty coping with new or unfamiliar experiences and rely on structured routines and adult support
- Require consistent, sustained support to access learning, participate in social interaction and develop independence
- Experience significant difficulties with attention, concentration and engagement across learning environments
- May have additional learning needs and associated conditions, including Auditory Processing Disorder, Auditory Neuropathy or Cerebral Visual Impairment

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint VI/HI assessment reports are shared with all relevant staff and embedded consistently in practice</li> <li>• Assessment is highly individualised and reflects the combined impact of hearing and vision needs on access, engagement and progress.</li> <li>• Access arrangements are in place for internal and external assessments, including modified formats and additional time.</li> <li>• Planning reflects current levels of achievement and is informed by specialist advice from QTVI and QToD.</li> <li>• Outcomes and targets are highly personalised, focusing on access, communication, independence and participation.</li> <li>• Planning reflects the interaction between sensory needs and is applied consistently across all lessons, routines and environments.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching approaches are highly individualised and informed by QTVI and QToD advice.</li> <li>• All recommended adjustments are implemented consistently to support access to learning and participation.</li> <li>• Additional time is routinely provided to support processing, engagement and completion of tasks.</li> <li>• Teaching incorporates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear explanation, clarification and reinforcement of lesson content</li> <li>- Structured repetition and overlearning</li> <li>- Multi-sensory and accessible communication approaches</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Careful consideration is given to seating, lighting, acoustics and reduction of visual and auditory complexity.</li> <li>• Curriculum delivery may be significantly adapted, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prioritisation of key learning outcomes</li> <li>- Adjustments to pace, structure and expectations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teaching supports social, emotional development and participation through structured and supported interaction.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Authority Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialist advice and consultation are provided by QTVI and QToD to support curriculum adaptation and access.</li> <li>• Intervention planning reflects identified needs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access skills</li> <li>- Communication development</li> <li>- Pre- and post-teaching approaches</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Specialist teaching input may be provided directly where appropriate.</li> <li>• Support aligns with national frameworks (e.g. NatSIP, including 8 Learner Outcomes)</li> <li>• Ongoing guidance supports consistent implementation of highly adapted teaching approaches.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <p><b>School Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional MSI-trained staff are deployed consistently to provide daily, targeted support.</li> <li>• Adult support focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explanation, clarification and reinforcement</li> <li>- Supporting communication and access</li> <li>- Enabling participation while promoting independence</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Access to a quiet, low-distraction environment is provided for planned 1:1 and small group sessions.</li> <li>• Individual mobility, orientation and independent life skills programmes are implemented.</li> <li>• Specialist approaches include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tactile and experiential learning</li> <li>- Auditory and visual access strategies</li> <li>- Alternative communication systems where required</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Adapted and specialist equipment is used consistently to support access.</li> <li>• Low vision aids and non-specialist equipment are embedded in everyday practice.</li> <li>• Access to multi-sensory learning materials, including tactile and auditory resources.</li> <li>• Daily opportunities for 1:1 and small group teaching are planned to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preview and review learning</li> <li>- Support access to new concepts and experiences</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |



## Physical & Medical

Children and young people with Physical and Medical Needs may have a disability, medical condition, long-term illness, or physical impairment that affects their access to learning, participation in school life, independence, stamina, mobility, or physical comfort. Their needs can vary widely in presentation and impact: some pupils may require minimal classroom adaptations, whereas others may need carefully planned, specialist-informed adjustments throughout the school day.

Physical and medical needs do not automatically limit a pupil's cognitive ability or level of attainment. Pupils may be working well above, at, or below age-related expectations depending on the nature of their needs and the degree to which their health and physical functioning affect participation and learning.

### These needs may influence:

- Access to the physical environment
- Fatigue and stamina across the school day
- Fine and gross motor coordination
- Participation in practical subjects and PE
- Personal care, toileting, and feeding
- Attendance and energy levels
- Emotional wellbeing, confidence and peer relationships
- Safety and risk management around mobility or health conditions

Schools have clear legal duties to ensure that pupils with physical and medical needs can access education on an equal basis with their peers, and they must consider both the educational impact and the functional impact on day-to-day participation when planning support.

## Universal: Physical & Medical

### Descriptors of Need

Has a physical difference or medical condition that may impact elements of access to learning or participation within the school environment. They may demonstrate some of the following characteristics:

- Emerging fine motor skills and developing approaches to recording.
- Growing independence in self-help routines.
- Emerging gross motor coordination differences that are noticeable during physical education activities.
- Considerations may be required for risk assessments in contexts, such as educational visits, high-level physical activities or use of playground equipment.
- May require incidental support with continence and/or toileting.
- May show emerging signs of reduced self-esteem due to physical / medical condition.
- May have a physical or medical condition that affects attendance intermittently or on a short-term basis.
- Working at expected levels in line with peers.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is integrated within whole-school and classroom-based assessment processes.</li> <li>• QFT and adaptations are consistently implemented to address any gaps in learning.</li> <li>• Planning includes adaptation for cohorts.</li> <li>• The school maintains effective communication with parents/carers regarding any medical needs that may affect education experience.</li> <li>• Promotion of pupil ownership, motivation and self-awareness where appropriate.</li> <li>• Referral to health care professional for medical concerns.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality First Teaching includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consistent adaptive teaching to reduce physical or medical barriers.</li> <li>- Proactive consideration of physical, medical and health needs.</li> <li>- Flexible approaches to classroom organisation, positioning and movement.</li> <li>- Adaptation of tasks, resources and recording methods to reduce physical barriers to learning.</li> <li>- Opportunities for rest, movement or changes in activity where required.</li> <li>- Use of buddy systems to foster peer support.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Learning is delivered in a classroom that incorporates QFT and adaptive teaching through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexible approaches to task design, pace and outcomes.</li> <li>- Adaptation of recording methods, resources or equipment.</li> <li>- Teaching approaches that promote independence.</li> <li>- Consideration of fatigue, health needs or physical comfort.</li> <li>- Consistent classroom practice that supports dignity, wellbeing and positive engagement alongside peers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No additional adult support is required beyond what is available in the classroom, but staff are aware of how to adapt their approach to meet individual needs.</li> <li>• All school staff have access to regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to build capacity and confidence in meeting diverse learning needs.</li> <li>• SENDCO supports whole-school practice and professional learning.</li> </ul> |

## Universal Plus: Physical & Medical

### Descriptors of Need

- Has physical difference or medical condition that may impact access to learning and participation within the school environment. They may demonstrate the following characteristics:
  - Ongoing development of hand-eye coordination, fine and gross motor skills, and recording.
  - Progress may be slower or less evident, despite the use of adapted teaching approaches.
  - May require more frequent incidental support with continence and/or toileting.
- Independence and self-help skills may still be developing requiring incidental support.
- Gross motor coordination differences may continue to emerge, often observed during physical education activities.
- A medical condition may affect attendance and may require a Health Care Plan.
- Working towards expected levels but continues to make progress at a consistent rate.
- Emerging impact on confidence, self-esteem, or peer relationships linked to participation barriers is present.
- There may be other needs or circumstances such as social, emotional, or environmental factors that influence the pupil's learning and should be considered.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <b>In addition to Universal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching plans clearly reflect individual adjustments made to enable the pupil to access the curriculum effectively.</li> <li>• Use of school based assessments and observations to identify emerging barriers relating to mobility, stamina, fine or gross motor skills, or health needs</li> <li>• Health or medical plans are reviewed and updated in collaboration with parents/carers and relevant health professionals.</li> <li>• Health professionals may be consulted for further insight and advice.</li> <li>• Where barriers to learning are not reduced through adaptation, teachers discuss with SENDCO to determine any appropriate referrals that may be appropriate.</li> </ul> | <b>In addition to Universal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning takes place in class with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More frequent and consistent use of adaptive teaching to reduce physical and medical barriers to learning.</li> <li>- Planned adaptation to tasks, resources and recording methods.</li> <li>- Increased consideration of pace, stamina and physical comfort.</li> <li>- Information is chunked into small, achievable steps.</li> <li>- Appropriate pre-teaching or reinforcement where physical or medical needs impact participation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Opportunities for small group work are provided based on identified differences such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing fine and gross motor skills within curriculum-linked activities.</li> <li>- Developing independence, organisation and self-help skills within learning contexts.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Curriculum access is supported through planned adaptations, including flexible approaches to tasks, resources and recording methods, to reduce physical or medical barriers to learning.</li> <li>• Inclusive grouping arrangements are used, enabling pupils to participate alongside peers and build confidence, independence and positive peer relationships.</li> <li>• Time-limited, interventions, focus on improving access, participation and functional skills e.g., handwriting, gross motor skills activities.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interventions are clearly defined with agreed entry and exit criteria, allowing progress and impact to be monitored and informing future planning and adaptation of provision.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <b>In addition to Universal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class/subject teacher leads provision with SENDCO support.</li> <li>• Targeted support from additional adults under teacher direction.</li> <li>• Minimal supervision for hygiene and outdoor activities.</li> <li>• Health professional advice sought as required. Staff receive awareness training for relevant medical conditions.</li> <li>• Continued access to adapted tools and equipment.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adapted resources and alternative recording methods available to reduce handwriting demands where appropriate.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

## Targeted: Physical & Medical

### Descriptors of Need

- Has a physical disability or medical condition that has a clear and ongoing impact on access to learning and participation within the school environment. They are likely to demonstrate the following characteristics:
  - Difficulties with fine and/or gross motor skills that impact recording, practical tasks or participation in physical activities.
  - Mobility, coordination, stamina, or physical engagement is impacted, particularly during specific lessons or activities.
  - Continence and/or toileting needs that require routine consideration.
  - Variable independence in self-help routines, personal care or mobility.
  - Reliance on seating that supports posture for fine motor activities and feeding.
  - Ambulatory use of mobility aids such as a wheelchair or walking aid, dependent on need.
  - Progress that may be slower or less consistent than peers.
- A medical condition that intermittently affects attendance and requires a Health Care Plan.
- Impact on confidence, self-esteem, or peer relationships linked to participation barriers.
- Attainment may vary depending on the nature of needs identified, ranging from well above average to well below average.
- External service advice may be required to meet health and safety legislation in areas such as classroom learning, personal care and break/lunch times.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment identifies specific physical / motor difficulties and/or medical needs are widening the gap in learning despite consistent adaptation.</li> <li>• Planning is purposeful and outcome-focused, identifying the skills or areas of independence to be developed.</li> <li>• Health or medical care plan continues to inform planning, alongside a clearer focus on functional impact.</li> <li>• Monitoring focuses on the impact of adaptations on access, participation and progress.</li> <li>• SENDCO is involved in reviewing impact and planning next steps.</li> <li>• Referral to Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy if initial strategies show limited progress.</li> <li>• Risk assessments are completed as required and are reviewed regularly.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning continues primarily in class with targeted teaching approaches designed to address identified difficulties including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased planned adaptation to tasks, resources and recording methods.</li> <li>- Structured opportunities to develop specific functional skills e.g., fine motor control</li> <li>- Information is chunked into smaller, achievable steps.</li> <li>- Explicit teaching or reinforcement to support participation and self-management.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Targeted opportunities for small group work or focused activity are used to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build skills that support access to the curriculum.</li> <li>- Increase independence within learning and daily routines.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Curriculum access is supported through targeted activity that focuses on developing skills required for participation that are guided by advice from Occupational Therapy and/or Physiotherapy including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Structured handwriting development programme.</li> <li>- Use of adapted writing materials and equipment.</li> <li>- Fine motor skills development programme.</li> <li>- Adapted P.E.</li> <li>- Dressing and undressing skills programme.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increased reliance on ICT for recording and learning.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class / subject teacher remains responsible for provision, with SENDCO involvement.</li> <li>• Additional adult support is planned and purposeful, focused on skill development rather than task completion.</li> <li>• Staff involved are familiar with agreed strategies and routines.</li> <li>• Continued access to adapted equipment and alternative recording methods.</li> <li>• Staff may receive more focused guidance or training linked to the pupils' specific needs.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted Plus: Physical & Medical

### Descriptors of Need

- Has a physical disability or medical condition that has an ongoing impact on access to learning and participation within the school environment. They are likely to demonstrate the following characteristics:
  - Significant difficulties with fine and/or gross motor skills that impact all elements of recording, practical tasks and participation in physical activities.
  - Mobility, coordination, stamina, or physical engagement that impact all lessons and activities.
  - Continence and/or toileting needs that require frequent and consistent consideration.
  - Reduced independence in self-help routines, personal care or mobility.
  - Increased reliance on seating that supports posture for fine motor activities and feeding.
  - Use of mobility aids such as a wheelchair or walking aid, dependent on need.
  - Progress that may be slower or less consistent than peers.
- Increasing impact on confidence, self-esteem, or peer relationships linked to participation barriers.
- Progress that may be uneven or fragile, with outcomes increasingly focused on access, participation, and functional skills alongside academic learning.
- Co occurring needs or circumstances that compound the impact of the physical or medical need.
- Attainment may vary depending on the nature of needs identified, ranging from well above average to well below average.
- Attendance, energy levels, or engagement are impacted over time.
- External service input is required to meet health and safety legislation in areas such as classroom learning, personal care and break/lunch times.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is more frequent and detailed, drawing on a range of evidence to understand the sustained impact of physical or medical needs on access and participation.</li> <li>• Evaluation by SENDCO and Specialist Services e.g., Speech &amp; Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy.</li> <li>• Close collaboration with parents/carers to ensure shared understanding of needs, strengths and priorities.</li> <li>• Planning is individualised and embedded across curriculum, routines and wider school life.</li> <li>• Support strategies are embedded across daily school activities.</li> </ul> | <b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning continues primarily in class with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Targeted teaching approaches designed to address identified difficulties</li> <li>- Consistent, enhanced adaptive teaching embedded across all lessons.</li> <li>- Individualised task design, resources and recording methods.</li> <li>- Frequent structured opportunities to develop specific functional skills e.g., fine motor control</li> <li>- Careful management of pace, stamina, fatigue and physical comfort.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Purposeful and planned, targeted opportunities for small group work or structured support are used to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build skills that support access to the curriculum.</li> <li>- Increase independence within learning and daily routines.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Curriculum access is supported through frequent targeted activity that focuses on developing skills required for participation that are determined, monitored and reviewed by Occupational Therapy and/or Physiotherapy including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motor skills development programmes</li> <li>- Extended adaptation of all physical activities</li> <li>- Functional independence interventions such as dressing skills, managing equipment and organisation routines.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increased reliance on ICT for recording and learning.</li> <li>• Emotional wellbeing activities are linked to curriculum where participation barriers contribute to reduced self-esteem or social withdrawal.</li> </ul> | <b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class / subject teacher remains responsible for provision, with SENDCO oversight.</li> <li>• Additional adult support is planned and purposeful, focused on skill development rather than task completion.</li> <li>• Staff involved are familiar with agreed strategies and routines.</li> <li>• Staff may receive more focused guidance or training linked to the pupils' specific needs.</li> <li>• Support for mobility and personal care needs based on assessed needs determined by professional advice and recommendations.</li> <li>• Consistent access to adapted equipment and alternative recording methods in all classes and activities.</li> <li>• Advanced ICT tools and AAC systems</li> <li>• Hygiene facilities including hoisting where required</li> <li>• Dedicated equipment storage and charging facilities.</li> <li>• Annual review of resources to ensure consistency and adequacy.</li> </ul> |

## Specialist: Physical & Medical

### Descriptors of Need

- Has a physical disability or medical condition that has a significant and ongoing impact on access to learning and participation within the school environment. They are likely to demonstrate the following characteristics:
  - Significant and persistent difficulties with fine and/or gross motor skills that impact all elements of recording, practical tasks and participation in physical activities.
  - Substantial mobility, coordination, stamina, or physical engagement that impact all lessons and activities.
  - Increased continence and/or toileting needs that require frequent and consistent consideration.
  - Limited independence in self-help routines, personal care or mobility.
  - Increased reliance on seating that supports posture for fine motor activities and feeding.
  - Physical access needs that affect engagement with the curriculum, wider school environment or aspects of school life.
  - Use of mobility aids such as a wheelchair or walking aid, dependent on need.
  - May use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).
  - May be living with a developing neuro-muscular degenerative condition or may have experienced a traumatic incident resulting in brain or physical injury.
- Significant impact on social interaction, confidence, self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and peer relationships linked to reliance on adult support or restricted participation.
- Progress that is slower and more variable with learning outcomes increasingly focused on access, participation, and functional skills alongside academic learning.
- Co occurring needs or circumstances that compound the impact of the physical or medical need.
- Attainment varies dependent on the nature of needs identified, ranging from well above average to well below average.
- Attendance, energy levels, or engagement are significantly impacted over time.
- External service input is required to meet health and safety legislation in areas such as classroom learning, personal care and break/lunch times.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is continuous, detailed and highly individualised, drawing on a wider range of evidence to understand the full day impact of physical/medical needs across lessons, transitions and unstructured times.</li> <li>• Specialist services e.g., Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Community Nursing provide regular input, and their recommendations are central to planning and assessment.</li> <li>• Health or medical care plans are reviewed frequently with clear protocols for classroom learning, transitions, and personal care that are followed by all staff.</li> <li>• Close, ongoing collaboration with parents/carers and external professionals to maintain consistent understanding of needs, risk, stamina and progress</li> <li>• Functional outcomes e.g., self-help, independence, positioning, stamina are embedded into planning alongside academic aims.</li> <li>• Risk assessments are in place for curriculum activities, movement around school, practical learning and educational visits and are reviewed regularly.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching highly personalised and embedded across all lessons, with adaptations informed by ongoing specialist advice.</li> <li>• Significant adaptations are consistently applied across the curriculum, such as:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alternative ways to complete practical tasks.</li> <li>- Complete redesign of high-demand motor tasks.</li> <li>- Modified physical activities in PE and unstructured times.</li> <li>- Reduced/adjusted expectations for extended fine motor activities e.g., writing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Fatigue-management is integral to curriculum delivery including:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planned rest breaks</li> <li>- Adjusted activity length</li> <li>- Timetable adaptation to preserve energy for high-value learning</li> <li>- Movement, positioning and stamina routines recommended by therapeutic services are embedded within lessons</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Pre-teaching and reinforcement are used more frequently where motor demands affect content uptake.</li> <li>• Independence development is explicit, with tasks designed to:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build self-help and self-management</li> <li>- Reduce reliance on adults where safe to do so</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increase participation in routines, transitions and group learning.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class/subject teacher retains responsibility for learning with significant SENDCO involvement in coordinating specialist advice, safety planning and curriculum adaptation.</li> <li>• Additional adult support is           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planned, consistent and skilled</li> <li>- Required during personal care, movement around school, practical lessons and identified high-demand tasks.</li> <li>- Focused on safe access, independence and function.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Staff working with the pupil are trained in specialist routines and follow guidance from external services.</li> <li>• Interventions are regular, specialist informed and long-term focusing on:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Functional motor skills (fine and gross)</li> <li>- Stamina and endurance</li> <li>- Transfer and mobility skills</li> <li>- Posture and positioning routines</li> <li>- Safe and confident use of mobility aids</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Interventions are delivered in partnership with specialist services, with school staff trained to carry out programmes consistently.</li> <li>• Assistive technology interventions to enable access to the curriculum with minimal physical demand.</li> <li>• Specialist equipment provided as determined by assessed needs e.g., adjustable desks, postural seating.</li> </ul> |

# Sensory Processing Differences

Sensory processing differences refer to the way children and young people perceive, interpret and respond to sensory information from their environment and their own bodies. These differences can affect one or more sensory systems and may present as heightened sensitivity, reduced responsiveness, or sensory seeking behaviours. The impact varies widely and can influence a learner's ability to engage with learning, regulate emotions, interact socially, and participate meaningfully in school life.

## Sensory systems include:

- **Auditory:** Sound and noise,
- **Visual:** Light, colour and visual detail,
- **Tactile:** Touch, texture and temperature,
- **Olfactory:** Smell,
- **Gustatory:** Taste,
- **Vestibular:** Movement, balance and spatial orientation,
- **Proprioceptive:** Body awareness, muscle force and joint position,
- **Interoceptive:** internal body signals such as hunger, thirst, fatigue and emotional arousal.

Differences within these systems can affect how safe, organised and regulated a child or young person feels, particularly in busy, unpredictable or sensory-rich environments. Responses may change depending on context, activity, time of day, emotional state and familiarity with routines and adults. Sensory processing differences are therefore dynamic and situational, rather than fixed traits.

Children and young people with sensory processing differences may experience challenges with transitions, attention, motor coordination, emotional regulation and tolerance of sensory input. These challenges are not always visible and may be misinterpreted as behavioural or motivational difficulties without an understanding of the underlying sensory factors. A strengths-based approach recognises sensory differences as part of a learner's unique profile and focuses on identifying what helps them feel regulated, engaged and ready to learn.

All staff working with children and young people who experience sensory processing differences have a role in implementing inclusive, responsive practice. This includes ensuring that teaching approaches, routines, environments, curriculum access and communication methods are attuned to sensory needs. Effective implementation supports equitable access to learning and helps foster a sense of safety, belonging and confidence across both academic and social contexts.



## Universal: Sensory Processing Differences

### Descriptors of Need

Has sensory processing preferences that may impact elements of elements of learning or participation within the school environment. They may demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Show preferences for certain textures, sounds or activities, but generally engages and participates alongside peers.
- Posture, coordination and motor planning are broadly within the typical range, with occasional variability.
- Show brief signs of discomfort in crowded, noisy or highly stimulating environments, which are short-lived.
- Sensory responses are context-dependent and do not create barriers to learning, regulation or social interaction.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress is monitored through routine class-based and school-wide assessment processes, including observation of engagement, regulation and participation.</li> <li>• Class or subject teachers use ongoing assessment and observation to understand how sensory factors may influence learning and participation.</li> <li>• The school uses its existing assessment and monitoring approaches to track patterns over time, rather than separate or specialist tools.</li> <li>• Planning is responsive and rooted in Quality First Teaching principles, taking account of sensory preferences as part of a whole-child view.</li> <li>• QFT and inclusive adaptations are consistently implemented to support access, regulation and engagement for all learners.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality First Teaching includes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness of sensory preferences and responses identified through routine observation and a whole-child understanding.</li> <li>- Consideration of sensory load within everyday teaching, including noise levels, visual clutter, movement and transitions.</li> <li>- Use of clear routines and predictable structures to support regulation and engagement.</li> <li>- Teaching approaches that support emotional literacy and self-regulation through whole-class discussion and modelling.</li> <li>- Flexible classroom organisation (e.g. seating, access to movement) to support comfort and participation for all learners.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Learning is delivered in a classroom that incorporates QFT and adaptive teaching through:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities for sensory exploration and movement embedded naturally within daily activities.</li> <li>- Visual supports and consistent routines to support understanding and reduce uncertainty.</li> <li>- Whole-class opportunities for incidental movement and sensory regulation, supporting focus and engagement.</li> <li>- Curriculum delivery that takes account of sensory preferences, without individualisation or withdrawal from learning.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is delivered primarily by the class or subject teacher, within an inclusive setting.</li> <li>• Classroom resources and staffing are used flexibly to support learning, communication and engagement.</li> <li>• Inclusive resources are available to all pupils (e.g. visual aids or regulation tools).</li> <li>• Whole-school environments reflect sensory-inclusive principles.</li> <li>• Staff have access to awareness-level training relating to sensory processing differences.</li> <li>• Pupils can access school-based wellbeing and pastoral support where appropriate.</li> </ul> |

## Universal Plus: Sensory Processing Differences

### Descriptors of Need

Has emerging sensory processing differences that are more noticeable and frequent than at Universal and are beginning to affect participation or engagement in some contexts. They may:

- Show intermittent sensory-seeking or sensory-avoidant responses that interrupt learning or social interaction at times.
- Experience increased difficulty during transitions, changes in routine or environment, particularly where these are unpredictable.
- Show emotional responses (e.g., discomfort or withdrawal) in noisy, crowded or visually busy environments.
- Demonstrate requirement for more frequent opportunities for movement to maintain comfort, regulation and engagement across the school day.
- Demonstrate variable regulation across contexts, with increased difficulty in less familiar or more demanding situations.
- Show emerging impact on confidence, persistence or participation when sensory demands increase.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching plans clearly reflect individual adjustments made to enable the pupil to access the curriculum effectively.</li> <li>• Teachers use more focused observation across lessons, transitions and unstructured times to identify patterns, triggers and contextual factors affecting regulation and engagement.</li> <li>• Assessment draws on everyday classroom evidence, rather than specialist tools, to understand how sensory factors influence access to learning.</li> <li>• Planning reflects clear, intentional adjustments to support regulation and participation within Quality First Teaching.</li> <li>• Ongoing dialogue with parents/carers supports a shared understanding of sensory preferences and responses across home and school.</li> <li>• Where sensory differences are frequently affecting engagement, teachers discuss observations with the SENDCO to consider whether further monitoring or adjustment is required.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning takes place in class with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More deliberate consideration of sensory load, including noise, visual complexity, movement and transitions.</li> <li>- Planned preparation for changes to routines, activities or environments to reduce uncertainty and emotional demand.</li> <li>- Increased use of visual, auditory and environmental supports to aid predictability and understanding.</li> <li>- Teaching approaches that include explicit modelling of simple regulation strategies within whole-class practice.</li> <li>- Strategic classroom organisation (e.g. positioning, access to movement) to support engagement and participation.</li> <li>- Opportunities for small-group or peer-group activities where these support regulation, confidence and sustained engagement.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The class or subject teacher remains the primary provider of teaching and support.</li> <li>• Classroom resources are used more intentionally and consistently to support regulation and engagement (e.g. structured use of regulation tools).</li> <li>• Planned opportunities for whole-class or small-group sensory regulation activities (e.g. movement-based or proprioceptive activities) are embedded within the school day.</li> <li>• Sensory needs are supported discreetly and proportionately, without withdrawal from learning or over-reliance on adult support.</li> <li>• Additional adults may support regulation and engagement flexibly under teacher direction, without creating dependency.</li> <li>• Where required, SENDCO advice and guidance supports consistency of approach across staff and contexts.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted: Sensory Processing Differences

### Descriptors of Need

Experiences more frequent sensory responses that regularly impact engagement with learning and participation. They may:

- Demonstrate difficulties with self-regulation, which may present as anxiety, withdrawal or heightened activity levels.
- Sensory processing differences contribute to reduced tolerance of sensory-rich environments, including background noise or visual complexity.
- May experience periods of overwhelm, resulting in reduced attention, avoidance or disengagement.
- Shows heightened reactivity to unexpected or loud sounds, which can significantly disrupt focus and participation.
- Visual factors such as bright lighting or visual clutter have a noticeable impact on engagement.
- Demonstrate strong tactile preferences or sensitivities, including avoidance of certain textures or activities.
- Sensory processing differences may contribute to reduced postural stability or motor planning, affecting sustained participation in seated or structured tasks.
- Experiences difficulty maintaining regulation across the school day, particularly as sensory and cognitive demands accumulate.
- Sensory responses may begin to impact confidence, emotional wellbeing and persistence with learning tasks.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment focuses on identifying patterns, triggers and cumulative impact of sensory processing differences across lessons, transitions and unstructured times.</li> <li>• SENDCO supports focused observation and review, drawing together evidence from staff, parents/carers and the pupil where appropriate.</li> <li>• Assessment information is gathered over time to understand how sensory factors affect access, engagement, regulation and participation.</li> <li>• Planning includes clear, individualised outcomes related to regulation, engagement and access to learning.</li> <li>• Evidence demonstrates that Universal and Universal Plus strategies have been implemented consistently and reviewed for impact.</li> <li>• Where progress remains limited, SENDCO supports consideration of further assessment or advice, informed by evidence and parental consent.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching approaches are more deliberately adapted to reflect the pupil's sensory profile and reduce barriers to learning.</li> <li>• Learning activities are carefully structured and sequenced to manage sensory demand and support sustained engagement.</li> <li>• Increased emphasis on predictability, preparation and clarity, particularly around transitions and changes.</li> <li>• Opportunities for learning are shaped to reduce cumulative sensory load, while maintaining access to the full curriculum.</li> <li>• Teaching explicitly supports emotional literacy and awareness of regulation, embedded within everyday classroom practice.</li> <li>• Groupings, positioning and task structure are used intentionally to support participation and reduce overload.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The class or subject teacher remains the primary provider of teaching and support, with SENDCO oversight.</li> <li>• Time-limited approaches are introduced where required to support regulation, engagement and access to learning.</li> <li>• Resources and environmental adaptations are used systematically and consistently, rather than ad-hoc.</li> <li>• Additional adult support is planned and purposeful, focused on enabling access and participation rather than task completion.</li> <li>• Where evidence indicates limited progress despite targeted support, referral to Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy may be considered, with parental consent.</li> <li>• Staff working directly with the pupil receive targeted guidance or training to ensure consistent and confident implementation.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted Plus: Sensory Processing Differences

### Descriptors of Need

Has significant sensory processing differences that as impact on access, independence and wellbeing across most learning environments. They may:

- Experience frequent and longer periods of difficulty maintaining regulation, with sensory responses dominating daily functioning.
- Demonstrate heightened and prolonged emotional responses to sensory stimuli, including distress, withdrawal or escalation.
- Show marked intolerance to sensory input (e.g. sound, touch, light or smell), resulting in avoidance or disengagement.
- Experience difficulty sustaining engagement in learning activities due to cumulative sensory demand.
- Have significant motor planning, postural or coordination difficulties that restrict independent access to learning and routines.
- Find it increasingly difficult to tolerate certain everyday learning experiences without experiencing overwhelm or shutdown.
- Sensory processing differences significantly affect confidence, emotional wellbeing and independence, with limited recovery between demands.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment draws together multiple sources of evidence to understand the severity, persistence and pervasiveness of sensory impact across the school day.</li> <li>• SENDCO coordinates in-depth analysis of sensory processing needs, including impact on learning, regulation, independence and participation.</li> <li>• Specialist advice (e.g. Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy) is integrated into assessment, where evidence indicates this is required.</li> <li>• Planning is highly individualised, reflecting the pupil's sensory profile, triggers, recovery patterns and cumulative fatigue.</li> <li>• Outcomes focus on securing access, regulation, emotional safety and participation, alongside curriculum engagement.</li> <li>• Evidence demonstrates that lower-range provision has been embedded consistently and reviewed, and that needs persist despite this.</li> <li>• Planning reflects multi-agency collaboration and shared understanding with parents/carers.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is highly structured and deliberately adapted to minimise sensory overload and maximise readiness to learn.</li> <li>• Curriculum delivery prioritises regulation, access and emotional safety as foundations for learning.</li> <li>• Learning experiences are carefully sequenced and paced, recognising limited tolerance for sustained sensory demand.</li> <li>• Expectations for engagement, pace and output are flexed responsively based on regulation and readiness.</li> <li>• Teaching explicitly supports awareness of regulation and emotional states, embedded within everyday practice.</li> <li>• Curriculum access may include greater personalisation, while maintaining inclusion within mainstream wherever possible.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing and resources are deployed more intensively and consistently to enable access, regulation and participation.</li> <li>• Additional adult support is predictable and sustained, focused on enabling access and independence rather than task completion.</li> <li>• Resources and environmental adaptations are embedded as the pupil's normal way of working, not as reactive measures.</li> <li>• Specialist equipment or environments are used systematically, informed by assessment and reviewed for impact.</li> <li>• Staff working with the pupil receive targeted training and guidance to ensure consistent implementation.</li> <li>• Interventions are specialist-informed, closely monitored and reviewed frequently to ensure they remain appropriate and proportionate.</li> </ul> |

## Specialist: Sensory Processing Differences

### Descriptors of Need

Has complex and persistent sensory processing differences that have a substantial impact on daily functioning, access to learning, independence and wellbeing. These needs are evident across all contexts. They may:

- Experience sensory sensitivities that dominate everyday experience and significantly limit tolerance of typical environments.
- Demonstrate frequent and prolonged dysregulation, with intense and unpredictable emotional responses such as distress, withdrawal, shutdown or escalation.
- Be unable to maintain regulation independently, with sensory demands consistently overwhelming coping capacity.
- Have profound motor planning, postural or coordination difficulties that significantly restrict mobility, self-care and curriculum access.
- Show severe aversion to sensory input (e.g. sound, touch, smell or taste), resulting in avoidance of everyday activities.
- Have highly restricted engagement with learning and routines due to sensory overwhelm.
- Sensory processing differences have a significant impact on safety, emotional wellbeing, communication and independence, with limited recovery between demands.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment is comprehensive, ongoing and multi-source, integrating educational, developmental and specialist evidence to understand the full-day impact of sensory needs.</li> <li>• SENDCO coordinates assessment and planning, ensuring a shared and accurate understanding of complexity, risk and impact.</li> <li>• Specialist assessment (e.g. Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy) is integral to understanding functional impact and informing planning.</li> <li>• Planning is highly individualised, reflecting the severity, persistence and pervasiveness of sensory impact.</li> <li>• Outcomes prioritise regulation, safety, access, communication, emotional wellbeing and functional independence, alongside learning.</li> <li>• Progress and wellbeing are reviewed frequently, with evidence informing decisions about sustainability of mainstream placement.</li> <li>• Planning reflects close multi-agency collaboration and active partnership with parents/carers.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is highly individualised and specialist-informed, shaped around the pupil's sensory profile and regulation capacity.</li> <li>• Learning prioritises emotional safety, regulation and readiness, recognising that access to learning depends on these being secure.</li> <li>• Curriculum content is significantly adapted and prioritised, focusing on foundational skills, communication and functional engagement.</li> <li>• Learning is delivered through highly structured, experiential and multi-modal approaches, matched to sensory tolerance.</li> <li>• Expectations for pace, duration and output are flexed dynamically in response to regulation and stamina.</li> <li>• Learning opportunities are limited in scope but repeated frequently, supporting familiarity, consolidation and trust.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing and resources are highly individualised, continuous and predictable, forming a core part of the pupil's daily experience.</li> <li>• Additional adult support is essential for safety, regulation and access, with consistent adults providing stability and co-regulation.</li> <li>• Resources and environmental adaptations are embedded as the pupil's normal way of accessing learning, not as add-ons.</li> <li>• Specialist input is ongoing and integral, informing day-to-day practice rather than discrete interventions.</li> <li>• Staff working with the pupil have advanced training and expertise to support complex sensory needs consistently.</li> <li>• Provision is reviewed frequently to ensure it remains appropriate, proportionate and safe, with consideration of longer-term placement suitability.</li> </ul> |



## Social, Emotional & Mental Health

Children and young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs may experience challenges that affect their wellbeing, learning, relationships and participation in school life. These needs often arise from a complex interplay of factors, including neurodiversity, trauma, attachment difficulties, adverse childhood experiences, physical or mental health conditions, environmental stressors, or unmet emotional needs.

SEMH needs may be expressed in a wide range of ways. A child's behaviour is often a form of communication, signalling distress, uncertainty, anxiety, frustration, or unmet needs rather than intentional defiance. Some children may withdraw, internalise emotions or appear disengaged, while others may present with heightened behaviours such as verbal outbursts or physical dysregulation. Presentation may vary depending on the adults involved, the environment, or the child's sense of safety, emphasising the importance of trusted relationships and predictable, consistent responses. Pupils with SEMH needs may demonstrate difficulties such as:

- Struggling to engage with adult-led tasks
- High dependence or avoidance of specific adults
- Difficulty managing strong emotions
- Challenges forming or maintaining relationships with peers
- Variability in attendance or persistent absence linked to emotional distress
- Reduced resilience, self-esteem or confidence
- Behaviours that place themselves or others at risk

It is essential that schools adopt a stage-not-age approach. A pupil's chronological age may not reflect their emotional development or capacity to self-regulate. Previous experiences including trauma, adversity, inconsistent care, loss, or unmet SEND needs, can profoundly shape how a child perceives and responds to school structures, expectations and relationships. Recognising this is crucial to understanding need and planning supportive responses.

Mainstream schools play a vital role in creating the conditions in which children and young people with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs can feel safe, understood and able to thrive. Effective support begins not with individual interventions but with a whole school approach that prioritises emotional wellbeing, strong relationships, and inclusive practice for all pupils. This means fostering a culture where every child is valued, where adults are emotionally available and predictable, and where systems and routines are designed to reduce stress and increase a sense of belonging.

A school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies must be implemented consistently, fairly and with sensitivity to individual needs. Consistency does not mean uniformity; it means that all staff apply shared principles with clarity, compassion and respect, while making reasonable adjustments as required under the Equality Act (2010). Expectations should not inadvertently penalise children and young people whose behaviour is influenced by trauma, neurodiversity or emotional development. Behaviour is understood in context and viewed as a form of communication, with staff responding with curiosity rather than judgement. Anti-bullying approaches are embedded through clear policies, predictable routines and a strong relational culture, ensuring that pupils feel safe, listened to and confident to report concerns. Practice is underpinned by relational and trauma-informed approaches, with adults modelling calm, emotionally attuned responses and providing proportionate, strengths-based support that helps children and young people feel safe, regulated and ready to learn. Early identification, timely intervention and targeted support are used to prevent escalation and promote positive outcomes.

A strong graduated response is essential. Early signs of distress, withdrawal, agitation or disengagement should be recognised and acted upon promptly so that pupils receive support before needs escalate. This involves teachers adapting routines, environments and communication approaches, and using relational strategies that help pupils feel secure and regulated. When personalised plans are required, they should be co developed with the pupil, their family and relevant professionals, and they must be understood and applied consistently across the staff team.

Clear, ongoing communication is central to effective SEMH support. All adults working with the child need shared strategies, a common understanding of triggers and strengths, and confidence in how to respond in ways that maintain safety and dignity. Equally important is collaboration with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive coordinated, wraparound support where needed.

Children and young people should be active participants in planning, reviewing and shaping the support they receive. When schools create environments grounded in empathy, respect and high expectations, they build the foundations for children with SEMH needs to flourish emotionally, socially and academically.



## Social Development

Children and young people may:

- Prefer quieter social settings or need support to build confidence in peer interactions.
- Be developing social skills and resilience, and benefit from structured opportunities to practise these in safe environments.
- Respond positively to clear routines and expectations, though may need reminders or adaptations to fully engage.

- Be learning to navigate relationships with adults and peers and may need support to interpret social cues and manage interactions.
- Benefit from targeted support to strengthen social communication and understanding, especially where this impacts classroom engagement.
- Be working towards sustaining positive relationships and may need adult facilitation to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings.
- Be developing independence in self-care

## Emotional Development

### Children and young people may:

- Experience heightened emotions such as anxiety, stress, or excitement, and benefit from co-regulation strategies and safe spaces.
- Be learning to identify and name their emotions and triggers, with adult modelling and visual supports.
- Show fluctuating moods that affect social engagement or learning, and benefit from consistent routines and trusted relationships.
- Use behaviours to communicate distress or discomfort, which may be reactive or learned responses to challenging situations.
- Require supervision and support to remain safe on site, especially during moments of dysregulation.
- Show patterns of emotional vulnerability linked to specific contexts or times of day, and benefit from proactive planning.
- Be learning to navigate relationships with adults and peers and may need support to interpret social cues and manage interactions.
- Benefit from targeted support to strengthen social communication and understanding, especially where this impacts classroom engagement.
- Be working towards sustaining positive relationships and may need adult facilitation to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings.
- Be developing independence in self-care
- Express frustration or disengagement through behaviour, which may signal unmet needs or difficulty accessing the curriculum.
- Require support to express themselves safely and respectfully, especially during moments of emotional intensity.

## Mental Health & Wellbeing

### Children and young people may:

- Show variability in behaviour and engagement, which may reflect underlying emotional or mental health needs.
- Find it difficult to concentrate or remain on task, and benefit from movement breaks, sensory tools, or adapted learning approaches.
- Be under assessment or receiving support for mental health needs, including anxiety or attachment-related challenges.
- Require support to manage impulses and keep themselves and others safe.
- Be exploring identity and belonging, and benefit from affirming environments and trusted adults.
- Be developing empathy and emotional literacy and may need support to connect with others' perspectives.
- Seek stimulation or novelty through risk-taking behaviours and benefit from structured opportunities to explore safely.
- Prefer to lead or control situations and may need support to collaborate and compromise.
- Be learning boundaries in social interactions, including with unfamiliar adults, and may need safeguarding support.
- Express themselves in ways that reflect their lived experiences, including through language or behaviour that may be provocative or misunderstood. These expressions should be met with curiosity and compassion, not blame.
- Experience emotional distress linked to bullying, exclusion, or trauma, and may use controlling behaviours to feel safe.
- Engage in self-harming behaviours or express suicidal thoughts, requiring immediate and compassionate intervention.
- Be vulnerable to substance misuse or other high-risk behaviours, and benefit from multi-agency support.

## Universal: Social, Emotional & Mental Health

### Descriptors of Need

Emerging or changeable needs that may temporarily impact:

- Emotional regulation and social interaction.
- Following whole school and classroom routines.
- Developing and maintaining positive relationships with adults and peers.
- Identifying and interpreting internal responses to emotions.
- Turn-taking, reciprocal attention, and sharing.
- Levels of security or trust in adults which may fluctuate.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress is monitored holistically through routine observation and discussion between home and school.</li> <li>• Rigorous recording systems are used to monitor and track emerging needs.</li> <li>• Class/subject teachers use ongoing observation to inform next steps.</li> <li>• Planning is responsive and rooted in Quality First Teaching principles.</li> <li>• Teachers access advice and guidance through the Stronger Schools platform.</li> <li>• QFT and adaptations are consistently implemented to address early gaps in social and emotional development.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality First Teaching includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear, structured explanations with visual and concrete supports to enable effective non-verbal communication.</li> <li>- Consideration of tone, level, pace, and quantity of teacher talk to promote felt safety.</li> <li>- Explicit teaching of vocabulary and key concepts.</li> <li>- Regular incidental opportunities for revision, overlearning and skill reinforcement.</li> <li>- Teaching that supports transfer and generalisation of learning.</li> <li>- Flexible grouping and seating to promote peer learning, collaboration and confidence.</li> <li>- Nurturing approaches create opportunities for responsibility and leadership (e.g., class monitor, school council).</li> <li>- Resources and displays designed to promote independence and self-regulation.</li> <li>- Celebrating successes for all.</li> <li>- Rewards and sanctions systems are transparent, consistent, and fairly applied.</li> <li>- Clear routines and expectations, including smooth transitions between activities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Whole school environment includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A curriculum reflects and celebrates diversity, fostering respect and inclusion.</li> <li>- Relational approaches that foster a sense of belonging.</li> <li>- An inclusive ethos that promotes learning, wellbeing, and belonging for all pupils.</li> <li>- A culture actively supports positive attendance and engagement.</li> <li>- A strong PSHE / PD offer is well-planned, stimulating, and responsive to cohort needs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning is delivered in a classroom incorporating QFT and adaptive teaching.</li> <li>• Pupils have access to spaces where they feel safe and secure.</li> <li>• Opportunities are provided for pupils to learn and practice social and emotional skills.</li> <li>• Restorative practice approaches are used to build relationships and resolve conflict constructively.</li> <li>• Educational visits are planned inclusively, ensuring accessibility for all pupils.</li> <li>• Strong partnerships with parents/carers support consistency and shared responsibility for pupil wellbeing.</li> <li>• Stimulating classroom and playground environments that encourage engagement and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Quiet areas are accessible for regulation, reflection and decompression.</li> <li>• Staff access ongoing local authority training to maintain up-to-date knowledge of SEMH support.</li> <li>• Peer support opportunities e.g., playground buddies, and peer mentors enhance social confidence.</li> <li>• Lunchtime clubs promote social interaction and inclusion.</li> <li>• Staff access solution-focused conversations and supervision for reflective practice.</li> <li>• Time is allocated for liaison with parents/carers in line with school procedures e.g., consultation evenings.</li> <li>• Daily meet-and-greet routines foster positive relationships and a sense of belonging.</li> <li>• Clear systems support smooth internal transitions throughout the school day.</li> <li>• Use of early years learning journals at foundation stage to track holistic development.</li> </ul> |

## Universal Plus: Social, Emotional & Mental Health

### Descriptors of Need

Has emerging needs that are more frequent and noticeable. They may demonstrate:

- Ongoing development in managing behavioural, emotional, and social responses that intermittently impacts access to learning.
- A preference for autonomy or self-directed activities, leading to occasional difficulties following adult direction or whole-class expectations.
- Inconsistent sustained attentions with periods of emotional response, impulsivity, heightened energy or visible worry.
- Growing self-esteem and resilience but may show low level frustration when making mistakes or facing challenge.
- Some difficulties navigating social situations, particularly new or unstructured ones.
- Comfort-seeking activity or self-regulating behaviours using physical spaces e.g., hiding places or quiet corners.
- Intermittent reliance on adults for reassurance and emotional safety.
- Cautiousness or ambivalence in developing trusting relationships with adults and/or peers.
- Occasional cognitive or emotional confusion where communication lacks clarity or concreteness.
- Emotional availability for learning that may vary due to sleep disruption, changes in routine or external stressors.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Teaching, Learning & Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Intervention & Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class/subject teachers use focused and structured observation to identify patterns, triggers and contextual influences for emerging needs.</li> <li>• Simple check-ins or emotion scales are used to gain insight to the pupil's experiences.</li> <li>• Information about strengths and emerging needs are shared proactively with relevant staff.</li> <li>• Teaching plans clearly reflect adjustments made to enable access to the curriculum effectively and are responsive to evolving needs and strengths.</li> <li>• Educational visits are planned with additional forethought, ensuring accessibility and emotional readiness.</li> <li>• Parents/carers engage in regular dialogue to share observations and maintain consistency of approach.</li> <li>• Time limited interventions are implemented to support early regulation and engagement.</li> <li>• Where focused strategies do not lead to improved regulation or engagement, teachers work with SENDCO to identify further observations, tools or approaches.</li> <li>• Advice may be sought from the Healthy Minds Team.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanations and instructions are simplified or layered to ensure emotional readiness and reduce cognitive load.</li> <li>• Pre-emptive check-ins are used to gauge readiness and identify emerging stressors before learning begins.</li> <li>• Classroom routines are reinforced with additional visual cues, modelling or practice where needed.</li> <li>• Seating or group arrangements are adapted to support confidence, reduce anxiety and maximise chances of positive peer interactions.</li> <li>• Transitions between activities include additional preparation or reassurance.</li> <li>• Positive emotions and strengths are intentionally reinforced to nurture growing confidence and resilience.</li> <li>• Unstructured learning activities e.g., group tasks, discussions are supported through clear roles or prompts to reduce social uncertainty.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PSHE/PD content is adapted where necessary to ensure sensitivity to emotional needs and lived experience.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SENDCO and Pastoral Lead provide support and advice to guide inclusive practice.</li> <li>• Additional adults used flexibly to enable responsive groupings and co-regulation where appropriate.</li> <li>• Additional adult support is deployed effectively during unstructured times, e.g., lunchtime or extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• Supervision may be increased during transitions or busy areas of school to support safety and predictability.</li> <li>• Resources are designed to promote independence and self-regulation</li> <li>• Pupils may access nurture-informed spaces at planned times where available.</li> <li>• Staff participate in training to strengthen understanding of SEMH and trauma-informed practice.</li> <li>• Home-school communication tools support shared approaches and consistent messages.</li> <li>• Time-limited early SEMH interventions promote emotional literacy, confidence and emerging regulation skills.</li> <li>• Structured social opportunities rehearse sharing, cooperation, turn-taking and negotiation in supported contexts with adult guidance.</li> <li>• Visual cues and timetables are consistently used to support understanding and independence.</li> <li>• Pre-emptive check-ins with a trusted adult to support transitions, emotional readiness and early signs of dysregulation.</li> <li>• Self-regulation resources are used as part of a wider regulation approach.</li> <li>• Opportunities for small-group work support identified needs in a calm, supportive environment.</li> <li>• Personalised reward systems may be used to reinforce engagement, considering pupil context and wellbeing.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted: Social, Emotional & Mental Health

### Descriptors of Need

Has needs that are impacting access to the curriculum, learning, relationships and daily functioning across a range of contexts. They may:

- Show difficulties with emotional regulation that interfere with participation in learning.
- Struggle to follow routines despite clear structure and reassurance.
- Experience conflict with peers and be reliant on adults to mediate social interactions.
- Demonstrate behaviours that communicate distress such as withdrawal, escalation and/or oppositional responses.
- Display inconsistent emotional availability for learning across the day including avoidance, sustained distractibility or fluctuating attendance.
- Have fragile self-esteem or heightened sensitivity to feedback or challenge.
- Misinterpret social cues or show confusion in busy or unpredictable environments.
- Demonstrate stronger engagement when tasks are aligned with personal interest.
- Express strong emotions (including dysregulation) in highly visible and verbal ways when feeling overwhelmed.
- Experience periods of low mood, withdrawal or non-communication.
- Be vulnerable to unsafe choices, peer influence, social isolation or exploitation.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  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| <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class/subject teachers use detailed observation e.g., ABC trackers with SENDCO oversight to analyse triggers, patterns and needs.</li> <li>• Check-ins or emotion scales are used frequently and consistently to understand daily emotional experiences.</li> <li>• A personalised plan is written, shared, and used consistently by all staff, developed collaboratively with parents/carers to align home and school strategies.</li> <li>• Pupil voice is routinely gathered to understand emotional needs, preferences, and perspectives.</li> <li>• Clear SMART outcomes are set for regulation, participation, and relationship-building.</li> <li>• Targets are reviewed every 4–6 weeks to evaluate impact and adjust intervention cycles.</li> <li>• Regular briefings or quick reviews support ongoing reflection on what is working and what needs adjustment.</li> <li>• Monitoring identifies specific activities, times, or environments requiring additional scaffolding.</li> <li>• Where focused strategies do not lead to improvement, an SEMH assessment tool (e.g., Boxall Profile, SNAP) is completed to inform intervention choices. These are monitored and refined as required.</li> <li>• Consultation with the Healthy Minds Team contributes to planning and next steps.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching incorporates structured emotion coaching, modelling of regulation strategies, problem-solving and communication.</li> <li>• Learning is broken into manageable, clearly scaffolded chunks with explicit modelling, guided practice and low-pressure rehearsal opportunities.</li> <li>• Tasks are adapted to maintain emotional safety (e.g., scaffolded choices, layered success criteria, alternative formats).</li> <li>• Pre-teaching and post-teaching reduce anxiety and build confidence ahead of new or challenging content.</li> <li>• Flexible pacing is used where emotional need affects task initiation or completion, including planned pauses or graded task return.</li> <li>• Adults use consistent co-regulation strategies (e.g., predictable scripts, planned movement breaks).</li> <li>• Highly predictable routines and visual structures are tailored to the pupil's regulation needs, with a personalised visual timetable used across lessons (e.g., now-next board).</li> <li>• A trusted adult provides planned check-ins at key times (arrival, after unstructured times, before demanding tasks).</li> <li>• Advance warnings are routinely provided for changes to staffing, grouping, or curriculum content.</li> <li>• Creative, sensory-regulating, or expressive tasks are selected more frequently to support emotional processing.</li> <li>• Tasks incorporate pupil interests, strengths and motivational drivers to reduce avoidance and support persistence.</li> <li>• Opportunities for safe emotional expression are integrated through journaling, reflection, art-based or narrative tasks.</li> <li>• Activities that involve unstructured or socially pressured situations are carefully scaffolded to maintain security and predictability.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal &amp; Universal Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning takes place mostly within the classroom environment with targeted adaptations to reduce emotional demand.</li> <li>• Planned, time-limited learning occurs in alternative environments (e.g., nurture rooms, wellbeing spaces) linked to clear goals such as resilience or confidence-building.</li> <li>• Additional adults provide planned, time-limited support during lessons or transitions, focused on regulation and engagement.</li> <li>• Staff mediate peer interactions in structured ways to reduce conflict and misunderstanding.</li> <li>• A personalised regulation toolkit is co-developed with the pupil and used consistently by all staff.</li> <li>• Personalised visual resources are used across lessons and unstructured times to support predictability.</li> <li>• Pupil may follow an adjusted timetable at agreed times to reduce overload and sustain success.</li> <li>• Access to low-stimulus or quiet areas forms part of a planned regulation routine.</li> <li>• Regulation spaces include tools matched to the pupil's emotional and sensory profile.</li> <li>• Pupils engage in structured evidence-based small-group or individual SEMH programmes (e.g., social skills, nurture-based groups).</li> <li>• Intervention content is reinforced in class to support skill transfer and maintenance.</li> <li>• Restorative conversations are facilitated by trained staff with guided reflection and structured support for relationship repair.</li> <li>• Adults consistently model emotional language, thinking routines and self-regulation strategies.</li> <li>• Targeted small-group social communication work aligns with the pupil's identified developmental or relational needs.</li> </ul> |

## Targeted Plus: Social, Emotional & Mental Health

### Descriptors of Need

Has needs that significantly affect daily functioning, emotional wellbeing, relationships and access to learning across most contexts. They may:

- Show persistent difficulties with emotional regulation, resulting in frequent periods of dysregulation that markedly interrupt learning or participation.
- Experience intense emotional responses e.g., overwhelm, fear, frustration, shutdowns, that may be difficult to de-escalate and may occur in response to seemingly minor events.
- Demonstrate marked difficulty in forming and sustaining peer relationships, often due to misinterpreting intent, social reciprocity challenges or anxiety-driven withdrawal.
- Rely heavily on familiar adults for emotional security, showing separation difficulty, attachment-seeking or withdrawal/limited tolerance of unfamiliar people or situations.
- Exhibit behaviours indicating significant internal distress, such as prolonged avoidance, refusal, escalation or withdrawal, particularly in response to challenge, feedback, transitions or uncertainty.
- Have prolonged periods of limited emotional availability for learning, requiring extended time to regulate before re-engaging.
- Show rigid or inflexible thinking, struggling to adapt to changes in routine, expectations, social and/or sensory environments.
- Experiences prolonged low mood, anxiety or heightened vigilance, which may be expressed through irritability, disengagement, perfectionism or shut down.
- Display limited resilience and may become overwhelmed by unstructured situations, social complexity or unpredictable events.
- Be increasingly vulnerable to negative peer influence, unsafe choices or exploitation due to difficulties in recognising risk or understanding social motives.
- Communicate emotional or physical discomfort in ways that are indirect, masked or misunderstood ways.

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-source assessment is synthesised to build a detailed understanding of the pupil's experiences and stressors across contexts.</li> <li>• Observations focus on frequency, intensity, and duration of emotional responses to identify underlying themes, unmet needs, and key vulnerabilities.</li> <li>• Regular structured check-ins are embedded throughout the school day, with reflections used to adapt plans in real time.</li> <li>• Personalised plans include nuanced emotional profiles and individual regulation indicators to support recognition of early signs of overwhelm.</li> <li>• Planning is informed by the pupil's known regulation needs.</li> <li>• Pupil voice is gathered through tailored approaches (visual tools, coaching conversations, narrative methods) to ensure accessibility during periods of reduced communication.</li> <li>• Parents/carers contribute to a coordinated understanding of triggers, effective strategies, and stressors occurring beyond school.</li> <li>• SMART outcomes are refined to include emotional readiness, resilience building, and relational safety, with review cycles tightened where needed.</li> <li>• External assessments are integrated into planning and reviewed for impact.</li> <li>• Patterns indicating significant emotional vulnerability are flagged for multi-agency discussion.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching integrates highly structured relational practice, explicitly supporting emotional readiness before learning begins.</li> <li>• Learning activities are carefully shaped around the pupil's known stressors, with adjustments to sensory, social or cognitive demands.</li> <li>• Curriculum content is sequenced to begin with high-success, high-predictability tasks before introducing more challenging or unfamiliar learning.</li> <li>• Explicit links are made between emotional experiences and learning behaviours to help the pupil recognise patterns and build self-awareness.</li> <li>• Teaching incorporates frequent opportunities for co-regulation and supported emotional recovery within lessons.</li> <li>• Instructions and explanations are delivered using simplified language, chunking, visualisation and step-by-step guidance to reduce overwhelm.</li> <li>• Extended processing time is normalised and built into lesson structures.</li> <li>• Unstructured or socially complex learning experiences are either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly scaffolded with clear roles/scripts, or</li> <li>- Replaced with structured alternatives during periods of vulnerability.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tasks are personalised to the pupil's emotional profile, using strengths, interests and safe relationships to sustain engagement.</li> <li>• Evacuation of emotional distress is anticipated: staff plan for early intervention (e.g., quiet start, supported transitions, planned restorative points).</li> <li>• PSHE/PD curriculum is adapted to avoid triggers, with sensitive concepts framed through trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate approaches.</li> <li>• Learning expectations flex in response to dysregulation cycles; relational connection is prioritised over task completion until emotional safety is restored.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned and frequent access to a safe, familiar space is used proactively for co-regulation, emotional recovery, and preparation for learning.</li> <li>• Additional adults provide specialist-informed relational support, ensuring predictable connection points throughout the day.</li> <li>• Alternative learning environments are used more routinely at agreed times to support emotional stability and reduce overwhelm.</li> <li>• Personalised regulation plans include specific early-warning signs, agreed scripts, preferred strategies, and crisis-prevention approaches.</li> <li>• Interventions draw from specialist guidance (Healthy Minds recommendations, EP advice) and are delivered consistently across staff.</li> <li>• Highly structured social learning experiences are planned, rehearsed, and scaffolded to reduce relational risk and build confidence.</li> <li>• Adjusted or flexible timetables reflect the pupil's emotional availability for learning and may include graduated re-entry to challenging tasks.</li> <li>• Individualised sensory or emotional regulation tools are consistently available and integrated into lessons and recovery routines.</li> <li>• Targeted therapeutic-informed activities (e.g., emotion coaching programmes, resilience-building sequences, trauma-informed tasks) are delivered by trained staff.</li> <li>• Positive relational experiences are intentionally designed into the day (e.g., predictable check-ins, strengths-focused activities, small wins).</li> <li>• Communication between home and school is structured and more frequent to monitor patterns, triggers, and effective strategies.</li> <li>• Prolonged or intense dysregulation episodes trigger rapid review and adaptation of strategies by SENDCO and pastoral staff.</li> </ul> |

## Specialist: Social, Emotional & Mental Health

### Descriptors of Need

Has complex, persistent needs that profoundly affect emotional regulation, relationships, thinking skills, safety awareness and engagement in learning. Needs are enduring, present across all contexts and require highly individualised approaches. They may:

- Experience severe and persistent emotional regulation difficulties, including extreme distress, shutdown or escalation that significantly limits participation and requires extended recovery time.
- Present with chronic anxiety, trauma-related responses or pervasive low mood that impacts daily functioning, relationships and readiness to learn.
- Show high levels of emotional vulnerability, with very low self-esteem, intense self-criticism or difficulties trusting adults, leading to withdrawal, avoidance of connection or reliance on one trusted adult.
- Demonstrate enduring social communication difficulties that significantly impede understanding of social cues, boundaries, intentions and interpersonal safety.
- Find unstructured, unpredictable or socially complex environments overwhelming, often leading to anxiety, escalation or total disengagement.
- Exhibit very rigid, inflexible or highly anxious thinking patterns that make adapting to change extremely challenging and may trigger sustained dysregulation or shut down.
- Show behavioural patterns that reflect significant internal distress, including extreme avoidance, persistent refusal, high levels of aggression or complete withdrawal from learning.
- Be at heightened risk of social isolation, exploitation or unsafe behaviour, with limited ability to recognise risk or seek help appropriately.
- Have severely limited emotional availability for learning for much of the day, with engagement possible only under very specific conditions and personalised conditions.
- Experience physical, sensory or psychological responses associated with overwhelming stress such as panic, dissociation or somatic complaints that impede participation.
- Present with complex, overlapping needs e.g., neurodevelopmental profiles, adverse life experiences, that significantly compound their emotional, social and cognitive functioning

| Assessment & Planning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  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| <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive, holistic profile is developed using multi-agency information to understand complex and interacting needs.</li> <li>• Assessment includes analysis of trauma-informed indicators, sensory influences, and psychological or relational factors contributing to dysregulation or vulnerability.</li> <li>• Daily monitoring records emotional availability for learning, stress triggers, protective factors, and patterns of overwhelm using formats accessible to the pupil.</li> <li>• Planning is highly individualised and built around the pupil's emotional safety, relational security, and readiness for engagement.</li> <li>• Personalised plans include clarity on crisis indicators, early warning signs, and the strategies that support recovery and re-engagement.</li> <li>• Specialist advice (EP, Healthy Minds, CAMHS, occupational therapy, social care, etc.) is integral to planning and reviewed regularly to maintain accuracy.</li> <li>• Pupil voice is captured using highly flexible and adapted approaches due to communication, trust, or emotional readiness needs.</li> <li>• Parental/carer partnership is structured, frequent, and explicitly linked to shared monitoring and consistency across environments.</li> <li>• Outcomes prioritise emotional stability, safe relationships, and incremental steps toward engagement, recognising that academic progress may fluctuate.</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is highly individualised and grounded in a detailed understanding of the pupil's emotional, sensory and relational needs.</li> <li>• Curriculum is adapted to prioritise emotional stability, relational safety and gradual engagement, recognising that academic readiness fluctuates.</li> <li>• Learning tasks are broken into very small, predictable sequences with high levels of modelling and rehearsal.</li> <li>• Visual, concrete and simplified communication is essential to ensure understanding during periods of heightened anxiety, overwhelm or shutdown.</li> <li>• Lessons may incorporate planned regulation time, decompression periods and graded re-entry to tasks based on emotional availability.</li> <li>• Expectations are adjusted responsively during incidents of distress or prolonged dysregulation, focusing on connection, safety and recovery.</li> <li>• Social learning experiences are tightly structured, monitored and supported to ensure psychological safety.</li> <li>• Curriculum themes that may evoke distress are introduced gently or replaced with alternatives following multi-agency advice.</li> <li>• A familiar, trusted adult often supports the pupil at key points to maintain relational security.</li> <li>• Teaching incorporates therapeutic or recovery-focused approaches recommended by specialist practitioners.</li> <li>• Success is framed around emotional readiness, safe participation, relational engagement and incremental progress rather than pace or volume of academic output.</li> <li>• Adaptations ensure the pupil can engage safely during environmental stressors (noise, transitions, peers, sensory overload).</li> </ul> | <p><b>In addition to Universal - Targeted Plus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily access to a highly predictable, low-arousal environment is integrated into the pupil's timetable to maintain emotional and relational safety.</li> <li>• A familiar and trusted adult provides consistent relational anchoring, tailored routines, and specialised co-regulation across key points in the day.</li> <li>• Teaching may be delivered through shortened, highly structured sessions with recovery time planned before and after.</li> <li>• Personalised regulation plans include detailed crisis-management guidance, trauma-informed adjustments, and strategies recommended by external specialists.</li> <li>• Multi-agency recommendations (e.g., Healthy Minds, CAMHS, EP, OT, social care) are fully integrated into daily practice.</li> <li>• Interventions may include frequent 1:1 emotional check-ins, structured mentoring, or therapeutic-informed activities aligned to specialist plans.</li> <li>• Curriculum expectations are flexed to match the pupil's readiness for engagement, prioritising safety, regulation, and relational connection.</li> <li>• Social participation is facilitated through carefully selected, low-demand experiences with close adult support to ensure psychological safety.</li> <li>• Specialist sensory or emotional regulation resources are readily available and used responsively.</li> <li>• Adjusted timetables are co-planned with multi-agency professionals to balance emotional load and maintain access to core experiences.</li> <li>• Crisis recovery routines are well established, rehearsed, and understood by all staff who work with the pupil.</li> <li>• Regular structured meetings between school and home ensure consistent monitoring of wellbeing, stressors, and the impact of interventions.</li> </ul> |

# Glossary

|               |                                                                                                  |
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| <b>AAC</b>    | Augmentative and Alternative Communication                                                       |
| <b>APDR</b>   | Assess, Plan, Do, Review                                                                         |
| <b>ALD</b>    | Assistive Listening Device                                                                       |
| <b>BSL</b>    | British Sign Language                                                                            |
| <b>CAMHS</b>  | Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services                                                      |
| <b>CIN</b>    | Child in Need                                                                                    |
| <b>CPD</b>    | Continuing Professional Development                                                              |
| <b>CVI</b>    | Cerebral Visual Impairment                                                                       |
| <b>CWD</b>    | Children with Disabilities                                                                       |
| <b>DfE</b>    | Department for Education                                                                         |
| <b>EAL</b>    | English as an Additional Language                                                                |
| <b>EBSA</b>   | Emotionally Based School Avoidance                                                               |
| <b>EHCP</b>   | Education, Health and Care Plan                                                                  |
| <b>ENT</b>    | Ear, Nose and Throat                                                                             |
| <b>EYFS</b>   | Early Years Foundation Stage                                                                     |
| <b>HI</b>     | Hearing Impairment                                                                               |
| <b>ICB</b>    | Integrated Care Board                                                                            |
| <b>LA</b>     | Local Authority                                                                                  |
| <b>MSI</b>    | Multi Sensory Impairment                                                                         |
| <b>NatSIP</b> | National Sensory Impairment Partnership                                                          |
| <b>OME</b>    | Otitis Media with Effusion (Glue Ear)                                                            |
| <b>OT</b>     | Occupational Therapy                                                                             |
| <b>OAP</b>    | Ordinarily Available Provision                                                                   |
| <b>PEEP</b>   | Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan                                                               |
| <b>PfA</b>    | Preparation for Adulthood                                                                        |
| <b>QFT</b>    | Quality First Teaching                                                                           |
| <b>QToD</b>   | Qualified Teacher of the Deaf now known as Qualified teachers of deaf children and young people. |
| <b>QTVI</b>   | Qualified Teacher of Children and Young People with Vision Impairment                            |
| <b>SALT</b>   | Speech and Language Therapy                                                                      |
| <b>SDCF</b>   | Sensory, Development, Communication and Functioning (NatSIP Framework)                           |
| <b>SEMH</b>   | Social, Emotional and Mental Health                                                              |
| <b>SEN</b>    | Special Educational Needs                                                                        |
| <b>SEND</b>   | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities                                                       |
| <b>SENCO</b>  | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator                                           |
| <b>SSE</b>    | Sign Supported English                                                                           |
| <b>UDL</b>    | Universal Design for Learning                                                                    |
| <b>VI</b>     | Vision Impairment                                                                                |

**For further information:**

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🔍 <https://sendlocaloffer.southtyneside.gov.uk/>