Hope Tree School

Where difference is valued

Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy 2026-2028

Introduction:

This policy has been written in line with the expectations and guidelines of the SEN Code of Practice (2015). Hope Tree School provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all students.

The school's Curriculum Policy gives information regarding the specific nature of the curriculum delivered at Hope Tree School.

When planning, teachers set suitable learning challenges and respond to the diverse learning needs of the students. Staff take account of the special educational needs presented by the students they teach and make provision to support individuals or groups of students through their planning. This will ensure that all children are able to access and participate fully in the curriculum. Some students may require additional or different help from that of their peers.

Definition of SEND:

At Hope Tree School we use the definition for Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) from the SEND Code of Practice (2015).

> ***SEND:*** *A child or young person has special educational needs if she has a learning disability or a disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for her. A learning difficulty or disability is a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age. Special educational provision means educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for others of the same age in a mainstream setting in England.*

> ***Disability:*** *Many children and young people who have SEN may have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is "…a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities."*

This policy complies with the statutory requirement laid out in the SEND Code of Practice 0-25 (September 2015) and has been written with reference to the following related guidance and documents:

- KCSIE (2026)
- Equality Act 2010
- Statutory Guidance on Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions 2015
- HTS - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- HTS - Accessibility Plan

Educational Inclusion:

Hope Tree School offers a safe and secure environment promoting choice, inclusion and success to all students whatever their ability or needs. We have high expectations of every student and help them to achieve their full potential through the removal of barriers to learning and participation. We want all students to feel a valued member of the school community.

Through appropriate curricular provision, we respect the fact that students:

- Have different educational and behavioural needs and aspirations
- Require consistent and predictable teaching approaches, visual supports, concrete learning opportunities and modified language to support their learning
- Acquire, assimilate and communicate information at different rates
- Need a range of different learning experiences

Autism Statement

The majority of students at Hope Tree School have a primary diagnosis of Autism

- Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.
- Autism can manifest itself in different ways in different people, which means that while all autistic people share certain challenges, their autism affects each of them in different ways.
- Autistic people are also more likely than neurotypical people to experience over or under sensitivity to sensory input (sound, taste, smell, touch, light/colour and to know where their body is in space).
- Alexithymia, the inability to recognise and monitor one's emotions is also prevalent in autistic people.
- Some students at Hope Tree School may have comorbid diagnoses e.g. dyslexia.

Aims of the policy:

Hope Tree School exists to meet the needs of autistic girls aged 7 - 18 who may benefit from the breadth of the full mainstream curriculum, but due to the difficulties arising from their sensory, social and communication needs they are unable to manage a mainstream school environment.

At Hope Tree School all students, regardless of their individual needs are provided with inclusive teaching that will enable them to make the best possible progress and feel that they are a valued member of the wider school community.

We expect that all students with SEND will meet or exceed the high expectations set for them based on their age and starting points.

Ambitious educational and wider outcomes will be set for all students. We want all students to become confident individuals who will make a successful transition to their next educational placement at 16 or 18 and into adulthood.

We are committed to:

- ***empowering*** our students to understand their needs, identify when they need support and ask for it
- ***implementing*** good practice that promotes and sustains the wellbeing of all students
- ***delivering*** a consistent approach that enables all students to learn and make progress
- ***creating*** opportunities for interaction, social inclusion, independence, and self-reflection
- ***training*** and supporting staff, parents, carers and stakeholders so they can best meet the needs of all students
- ***communicating*** clearly and appropriately with our community
- ***providing*** a physical environment that is responsive to the sensory needs of all students
- ***working*** with other professionals to meet the needs of students and their families
- ***promoting*** opportunities for all
- ***celebrating*** difference

Scope:

This policy applies to all staff, students, parents/carers, volunteers, Advisory Board members and visiting professionals who work with students at the school.

Key roles and responsibilities:

We at Hope Tree School believe that it is the responsibility of all staff to assist in meeting the individual needs of the students to the best of our abilities.

Head of Pastoral Care:

The Head of Pastoral Care has strategic and day to day responsibility for the operation of the SEND policy and co-ordination of specific provision to support students with SEND.

Assessment:

Hope Tree School does not use formalised assessments to benchmark students. High staff ratios enable teachers and support staff to know students well and relevant information can be collected without the need for traditional benchmark assessments. Most students who attend the school have had difficult experiences in previous schools which informs this decision.

Over the course of the first half term staff spend time getting to know students and build relationships as a priority. Staff closely monitor engagement in all school based activities gathering information to inform teaching and learning plans enabling staff to identify gaps in a students' educational journey, and use this information to identify curriculum adaptations that might need to be made for each student.

Tracking spreadsheets are the main form of assessment at Hope Tree School. They are a form of ongoing, formative data collection, designed as a working document that is used in the moment, or immediately after lessons.

Purposes of the tracking spreadsheets:

- Record student progress against a lesson aim.
- Identify how factors that contribute to engagement impact students' academic attainment.
- Identify patterns in behaviour that influence student performance.
- A form of assessment that is not anxiety inducing for the students.
- Tracks curriculum coverage and exposure.

Most students at Hope Tree School are supported by an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP). The Head of Pastoral Care is responsible for completing applications for any additional funding identified.

Ongoing Monitoring:

The class teacher will assess and monitor the progress of the student in line with the school's working practices and, as necessary, consult with other professionals to devise any additional programmes of support. All students are monitored regularly by the class teacher who liaises with the Head of Learning to ensure that changes in rates of progress are noted as quickly as possible, and if appropriate, intervention/further support provided. Once additional support of any kind is in place it is closely monitored to ensure that it is effective and adjusted as the student makes progress.

Identification of needs:

The following four broad areas give an overview of the range of needs of the students at Hope Tree School. Our students often have needs that cut across all these areas and their needs may change over time. The support that we provide to an individual will always be based on an understanding of each students' particular strengths and needs and seeks to address them all using appropriate interventions targeted at their areas of difficulty and can include specialist equipment or software.

Communication and interaction:

Autistic students are likely to have particular difficulties with social interaction. They may also experience difficulties with language, communication and imagination, which can impact on how they relate to others. Students may have additional speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) often having difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them or they do not understand or use social rules of communication. The profile for each student is different and their needs may change over time. They may have difficulty with one, some or all of the different aspects of speech, language or social communication at different times of their lives.

Cognition and learning:

Where possible, support for specific learning difficulties may be required when students exhibit additional barriers to learning. Specific learning difficulties (SpLD), affect one or more specific aspects of learning. Examples include dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.

Social, emotional and mental health difficulties:

Students may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as externalising some behaviour. Some of these behaviours may reflect underlying mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression, self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Other students may have disorders such as attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder.

Sensory and/or physical needs:

Some students require special educational provision because they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided. These difficulties can be age related and may fluctuate over time. Many students with vision impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI) will require specialist support and/or equipment to access their learning. Students with an MSI have a combination of vision and hearing difficulties.

Managing the needs of students:

All students at Hope Tree School have an Education, Health and Care Plan. This document outlines the needs of each student and recommends the provision, resources, approaches and multi-agency involvement required to meet those needs.

All teachers are responsible for providing differentiated expectations for all students and delivering good quality personalised teaching. This is the first step in responding to the needs of all students at the school.

All teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the students that they teach. A student's academic progress is monitored by the Head of Learning on a termly basis or earlier where required. We fully expect that all students will have their needs met through the standard educational offer at the school.

The quality of teaching and learning at Hope Tree School is regularly monitored through a combination of lesson visits, work scrutiny and through monitoring of student progress information.

Training sessions are offered to all staff to help them develop their understanding of strategies to support our students and improve their knowledge of the range of needs that are most frequently encountered at Hope Tree School.

All students receive additional support for their special educational needs as part of day to day life at the school. The curriculum at Hope Tree School is adapted to suit student's individual needs. Teaching approaches incorporate strategies for autistic students, speech and language difficulties and sensory difficulties.

If additional support is required, the Head of Learning will consider all of the information gathered from within school about the student's progress based on their age and starting points and against national expectations of progress. This will guide next steps.

At Hope Tree School we have access to additional professionals including an Occupational Therapist, a Speech and Language therapist and School Counsellor. These services are contracted as needed. Additional professionals will be procured as the need arises and we will continue to work with other professionals already working with the student as needed.

We will ensure that we regularly monitor all students' needs so that each student's progress and development is carefully tracked from their starting points. We will listen to the views of the students and their parents/carers. In some cases we will draw on the assessments and guidance from other educational professionals, e.g. an Educational Psychologist or Speech and Language Therapist and from health and social services where appropriate.

An Annual Review of an EHCP is held annually for all students and this meeting is chaired by Fiona D'Arcy, Head of Pastoral Care. Parents/carers are invited to attend the meeting and it is expected that all students will be invited to complete their views or attend at least part, if not all, of the meeting.

Annual Review meetings take place throughout the year. The aim is to review an EHCP no more than 12 months from the date of the final plan or from the date of the previous review. Parents/carers are given two weeks' notice of the date of the review meeting.

Hope Tree School has students from more than one Local Authority Area and Annual Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the relevant LA policy.

All students at Hope Tree School will receive the following:

Communication and Interaction:

- Strategies to enhance the communication environment throughout the day
- Adapted curriculum to meet the needs of students with communication and interaction difficulties differentiated through presentation, pace of delivery and recording mechanisms.
- Intervention to support social communication in unstructured times.
- Opportunities for reinforcement/learning enrichments to apply skills learnt, support with organisational and problem solving skills.
- Access to an inclusive peer group to facilitate social and emotional development.
- Focus on promoting social interaction and social communication skills.
- Support to understand social situations and opportunities to apply skills learnt within the school setting and wider community.
- Access to a structured visual environment to reduce anxiety and promote independence.
- Support to facilitate effective communication, interaction and curriculum access / personal development and to ensure understanding of instructions and tasks and to modify language through a specified programme covering several areas of communication throughout the day.
- Support to develop attention and concentration skills throughout the day.
- Support for students to understand and participate in social situations and transfer skills across settings/ contexts.
- Interventions to support students in developing language for personal care, independence and emotional awareness.

Cognition and Learning:

- Appropriate adaptation of the curriculum through presentation, timing and recording methods.
- Assistance with recording and alternative recording methods for a number of curriculum areas.
- Opportunities for reinforcement/learning enrichment to apply skills learnt, support with organisational and problem solving skills.
- Small class sizes (6-8 per class) with support from a student support assistant as needed.
- Resources, learning and teaching approaches/strategies to support learning styles for students with a range of learning difficulties, e.g. visual, kinaesthetic and opportunities to overlearn, with practical and sensory-based activities
- Age appropriate PHSE and RSE teaching and learning resources
- Appropriately qualified/trained staff committed to meeting the needs of all students, with regular opportunities for training.
- Personalised learning activities.
- Small group work as routine within each class.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health:

- A form tutor in every class
- Opportunities to spend time with a preferred member of staff
- Access to a quiet / safe space where a student can go if they feel anxious or overwhelmed.
- On-going opportunities to develop empathy and the awareness of the needs of others.
- Mental Health strategies embedded in day to day life, to include:
    - mindfulness activities
    - relaxation strategies
    - problem solving
    - understanding of thoughts and feelings
    - managing strong feelings.
    - development of self worth and self esteem
- Where necessary, access to visual prompts /task checklists/ timetables/reminders to create predictability and enable students to reduce their levels of anxiety and develop independence.
- Access to age appropriate curriculum content on staying safe and making good choices.
- Close liaison with home to ensure students are supported in the best possible way at home and school.
- Key life skills based reward system embedded across the school supported by the Behaviour Policy.

Physical and Sensory:

- In line with professional recommendations access to recommended specialised equipment to support fine-motor skills.
- Opportunities for time out from the classroom when a student is feeling overwhelmed.
- Visual timetables.
- Multi-sensory delivery of some of the curriculum.
- Strategies to maintain fine and gross motor skills.
- Guidance and support to develop self-help and independence skills.
- In line with professional recommendations, access to recommended specialist equipment and/or specially adapted equipment in order to access the curriculum
- Assistance with self-help and independence skills.

Supporting parents/carers:

All parents can expect

- Timely responses to communications sent
- A choice of in person/remote meetings
- Termly parents evenings and reports
- To be included in the Annual Review Process
- Any access arrangements to be considered on request

In addition Hope Tree School will

- Complete any paperwork/questionnaires requested by external agencies
- Make a referral to external services where possible
- Participate in multi-agency meetings as required

Supporting students at Hope Tree with medical conditions:

- Hope Tree School recognises that students with medical conditions should be properly supported so that they have full access to education, including school trips and physical education.
- At Hope Tree School support is based on the individual needs of each student.
- Individual healthcare plans will be written with the advice of medical professionals.
- Where appropriate staff will participate in additional training for those students where a new medical need has been identified
- Where possible the school will commission additional training as needed
- Some students with medical conditions may be disabled and where this is the case the school will fully comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Monitoring and evaluation of SEND:

At Hope Tree School we regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of provision we offer all students and this informs future developments and improvements. This may include the following aspects:

- Professionals visits including members of the Advisory Board
- School Self Evaluation
- Questionnaires and surveys of parents/carers, students and staff

Training and development:

At Hope Tree School we ensure that all staff keep up to date with developments in teaching and provision to meet the needs of students with SEND.

This is achieved through:

- INSET and training for all staff delivered by a range of staff and external professionals
- CPD opportunities for all staff

Comments, compliments and complaints:

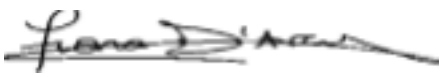
The school is always keen to receive feedback on all aspects of its work. Please use the normal methods of communication. Should you have a specific complaint, speak to your child's form tutor in the first instance in accordance with the published complaints policy.

You can access a copy of the policy in a number of ways. It is available on our school website and a hard copy can be requested from the school.

Related Policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy

Signed:  Head of Learning

Signed:  Head of Pastoral Care

Date: November 2026

Review Date: November 2028