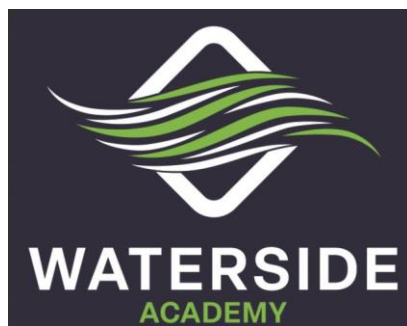




SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES SEND Policy

Policy owner	SENCO / Senior Leadership Team
Applies to	All pupils, parents/carers, staff, governors, commissioners and partners
Review cycle	Annual
Status	SEND Policy 2026/27
Academy	Waterside Academy

Key SEND contacts

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Inclusion • Communication • Aspiration • Nurture

Every pupil should be known, understood, included and supported to achieve ambitious outcomes.

Approved by Governors: September 2026 • Next review: September 2027

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Waterside Academy is committed to securing ambitious outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). As an alternative provision setting serving Key Stages 3 and 4, the academy recognises that pupils may arrive with a combination of identified needs, unmet needs, disrupted education, adverse experiences, communication differences, social and emotional needs, learning difficulties, neurodevelopmental profiles and health needs. Our response is child-centred, relational, trauma-informed and evidence-informed.

All teachers are teachers of pupils with SEND. The class or subject teacher remains responsible and accountable for the progress and development of every pupil they teach, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants, specialist staff or external professionals. Additional intervention does not replace high-quality, inclusive teaching.

Key principle The purpose of identifying SEND is to understand barriers to learning and participation and decide what action is needed – not simply to place a pupil into a category.

This policy has been updated for the 2026/27 academic year and has regard to the current statutory framework in England, including:

- Children and Families Act 2014, particularly Part 3 (children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities) and section 100 (supporting pupils with medical conditions).
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, as amended, including requirements relating to SENCOs and the SEN Information Report.
- Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years (statutory guidance).
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty not to discriminate and the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Alternative Provision statutory guidance, updated February 2025.
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (statutory guidance) and Allergy Safety in Schools statutory guidance, published July 2026.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, alongside current statutory safeguarding information-sharing duties where applicable.
- Education Act 1996 and relevant statutory duties regarding suitable education and access to education.

The academy also has regard to Sefton's Local Offer and local SEND procedures, funding arrangements and referral pathways. Where national or local guidance is revised during the policy year, the academy will implement the statutory requirement from its commencement date and update this policy at the next formal review, or sooner where necessary.

KCSIE 2026 is in force from 1 September 2026. SEND remains a safeguarding consideration because children with SEND can face additional barriers to recognising, reporting and being protected from abuse. Staff must avoid attributing changes in behaviour, communication or presentation solely to a pupil's SEND and must remain professionally curious.

The March 2026 statutory guidance strengthens expectations around inclusive, anti-discriminatory practice, child-centred multi-agency working, hidden harms, online harms, child sexual abuse and group-based exploitation. SEND assessment and provision should therefore be considered alongside the pupil's wider family, safeguarding and contextual needs.

From 1 September 2024, the leadership-level SENCO National Professional Qualification (NPQ) replaced NASENCO as the mandatory qualification for newly appointed SENCOs who are required to undertake the statutory qualification. Existing SENCOs who have already achieved NASENCO do not need to complete the NPQ. The statutory three-year completion window remains.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 received Royal Assent in April 2026. Measures within the Act commence at different times. For 2026/27, Waterside will implement relevant commenced duties and associated statutory guidance, including strengthened information-sharing and allergy-safety requirements where applicable. The Act does not, by itself, replace the current SEND Code of Practice or the existing statutory EHCP framework.

The Department for Education published further SEND reform proposals in 2026. At the date of this policy, wider reforms that require further legislation do not replace the existing statutory duties in the Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Regulations 2014 or SEND Code of Practice. Waterside will not treat consultation proposals as law and will update practice only when legislation or statutory guidance comes into force.

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. For compulsory school-age children, this includes having significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities generally provided for others of the same age.

Special educational provision is educational or training provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for pupils of the same age. It may include changes to teaching, specialist interventions, communication support, equipment, environmental adaptations, targeted adult support or specialist professional input.

- Communication and interaction – including speech, language and communication needs and autism.
- Cognition and learning – including moderate, severe or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyscalculia.
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties – which may include anxiety, emotional regulation difficulties, attention difficulties, trauma-related needs and other mental health presentations.
- Sensory and/or physical needs – including visual, hearing, multisensory and physical needs.

The four areas are not labels or mutually exclusive categories. Many Waterside pupils have overlapping needs. The academy considers the whole child and the interaction between SEND, attendance, safeguarding, health, relationships, communication, prior educational experiences and the learning environment.

The following factors do not automatically mean a pupil has SEN: low attendance or punctuality, English as an additional language, being disadvantaged, being looked after or previously looked after, family circumstances, being a young carer, or behaviour that challenges. However, these factors may coexist with SEND and may mask or exacerbate an underlying need. Professional curiosity and appropriate assessment are required.

- Identify SEND and emerging needs as early and accurately as possible.
 - Place pupil voice, strengths, aspirations and lived experience at the centre of planning.
 - Work in genuine partnership with parents/carers and commissioning schools.
 - Provide high-quality inclusive and adaptive teaching before and alongside targeted intervention.
 - Use a graduated Assess–Plan–Do–Review approach and evaluate the impact of provision.
 - Make reasonable adjustments so disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage.
 - Set ambitious outcomes and avoid lowering expectations because a pupil has SEND.
 - Promote belonging, participation, attendance, positive relationships, safety and successful transition.
 - Work collaboratively with health, social care, educational psychology and other specialist services.
 - Ensure decisions are evidence-informed, proportionate and based on need rather than diagnosis alone.
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- Has strategic oversight of SEND and inclusion and holds leaders to account for the quality and impact of provision.
 - Ensures the academy fulfils its Equality Act, SEND and accessibility duties.
 - Reviews SEND information, outcomes, provision, complaints and the SEN Information Report.
 - Ensures resources are used effectively and statutory duties relating to pupils with EHCPs are met.
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- Has overall responsibility for implementing this policy and for ensuring SEND is integral to whole-school improvement.
 - Ensures staffing, curriculum, safeguarding, attendance and behaviour systems are inclusive and make appropriate reasonable adjustments.
 - Works with the SENCO and governors to ensure statutory duties and commissioned provision are delivered.
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- Coordinates the academy's SEND provision and maintains strategic oversight of the graduated approach.

- Advises and supports staff on identification, assessment, adaptive teaching, interventions and reasonable adjustments.
 - Maintains and quality assures the SEN register, pupil profiles, provision mapping and relevant records.
 - Coordinates referrals and liaison with external professionals and the local authority.
 - Supports EHCP needs assessments, annual reviews, consultations and transitions.
 - Works with parents/carers, pupils, commissioners and other professionals to agree outcomes and provision.
 - Contributes to staff development and reports on the effectiveness of SEND provision to leaders and governors.
 - Coordinates the academy's SEN Information Report and ensures it is reviewed and published as required.
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- Remain responsible and accountable for the progress and development of pupils in their classes.
 - Know the needs, provision, strategies and reasonable adjustments for pupils they teach.
 - Use assessment and adaptive teaching to remove barriers and support independence.
 - Plan and evaluate targeted support with the SENCO and support staff.
 - Record concerns and contribute evidence to Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycles and statutory processes.
 - Communicate with parents/carers and pupils as part of agreed review arrangements.
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- Work under the direction of teachers and the SENCO to implement agreed provision.
 - Promote independence rather than creating unnecessary adult dependency.
 - Provide accurate feedback on engagement, progress and barriers.
 - Support communication, regulation, access and participation in line with individual plans.
 - Attend relevant training and follow safeguarding, behaviour and medical procedures.

Waterside uses information available before admission and evidence gathered during induction, baseline assessment and ongoing teaching. The academy does not wait for a diagnosis before putting appropriate support or reasonable adjustments in place where there is clear evidence of need.

Evidence may include:

- Previous school records, SEN support plans, EHCPs, annual reviews and professional reports.
- Parent/carer and pupil views.
- Teacher assessment, work scrutiny, curriculum progress and engagement.
- Reading, literacy, numeracy and other standardised or diagnostic assessments where appropriate.
- Attendance, behaviour, regulation and social communication patterns considered alongside wider context.
- Health, paediatric, CAMHS, speech and language, occupational therapy, sensory or educational psychology information.
- Observation across different settings and times of day.
- Information from social care, the Virtual School and other agencies where appropriate and lawful.

Important Behaviour that challenges, non-attendance or disengagement can be a sign of unmet need, but should not automatically be assumed to be SEND. Equally, they must not be used to dismiss possible SEND.

The teacher and SENCO gather evidence about the pupil's strengths, needs, progress, barriers and context. Assessment is proportionate and may include specialist advice. Parents/carers and pupils are involved from the outset.

Where SEN Support is required, agreed outcomes, teaching approaches, reasonable adjustments, interventions, staff responsibilities and review dates are recorded. Provision should be specific enough for staff to implement consistently and for impact to be evaluated.

The class or subject teacher retains responsibility for the pupil, even where intervention is delivered by another adult. Staff use the agreed strategies consistently and connect targeted intervention back to classroom learning and wider school participation.

Progress is reviewed against agreed outcomes. The review considers attainment, engagement, attendance, regulation, independence, wellbeing and pupil/parent views as appropriate. The plan is then continued, adapted, intensified, reduced or ended according to evidence.

For pupils receiving SEN Support, Waterside will maintain regular communication with parents/carers and will aim to hold at least three structured reviews each academic year, aligned with the SEND Code of Practice, with additional reviews where need or risk requires them.

The first response to emerging need is high-quality teaching adapted to the pupil. Teachers may adjust explanations, modelling, scaffolding, chunking, pace, task demand, language, resources, seating, sensory load, use of technology, response methods, routines and opportunities for rehearsal. Adaptation should maintain ambition while improving access.

Where universal classroom strategies are not sufficient, targeted provision may include individual or small-group literacy/numeracy support, communication intervention, emotional literacy and regulation work, mentoring, social communication support, therapeutic or specialist programmes, sensory strategies, personalised timetables or structured re-engagement work.

The academy uses provision mapping and individual records to show what support is being provided, by whom, for what purpose, at what frequency and with what intended outcome. Leaders review provision to identify gaps, duplication and interventions that are not having sufficient impact.

Placement on the SEN register is based on evidence that the pupil requires special educational provision that is additional to or different from the provision ordinarily available. Pupils are not placed on the register solely because of low attainment, absence, behaviour, disadvantage or EAL. Parents/carers are informed and involved in decisions.

Where evidence shows that a pupil no longer requires special educational provision, the academy will discuss this with the pupil and parents/carers, record the decision and continue appropriate monitoring. Removal from the SEN register does not remove the duty to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled pupil.

Where a pupil has significant, complex and sustained needs and SEN Support is not sufficient to secure the required outcomes, Waterside may support or make a request to the local authority for an EHC needs assessment. Evidence will normally include the graduated response, pupil and parent views, educational progress, provision already made and relevant professional advice.

Where Waterside is named in Section I of an EHCP, the academy will use its best endeavours and available resources to secure the special educational provision specified in Section F, working with the local authority and other responsible agencies. Staff will have access to the relevant parts of the plan and understand the provision they are responsible for delivering.

EHCPs are reviewed at least annually in accordance with statutory requirements and local procedures. Reviews focus on progress towards outcomes, the suitability of provision, current needs and aspirations, placement, preparation for adulthood where relevant, and any amendments required. Review paperwork is submitted within required timescales.

When consulted by a local authority, Waterside will consider whether the academy can meet the pupil's needs and whether placement would be compatible with the efficient education of others and the efficient use of resources, applying the statutory framework. Responses will be evidence-based and will distinguish between reasonable adjustments that can be made and provision that would require additional resources, specialist facilities or a different type of placement.

Waterside provides a broad, balanced and personalised curriculum designed to support re-engagement, academic progress, personal development and successful next steps. SEND should not unnecessarily restrict access to subjects, qualifications, enrichment, educational visits, physical education or careers opportunities.

Reasonable adjustments are considered individually and may include changes to the environment, timetable, communication, routines, equipment, presentation of work, sensory access, movement breaks, adult support, assessment arrangements or methods of participation. The academy will consider what is reasonable in the circumstances and will not charge families for reasonable adjustments.

Curriculum planning should avoid the unintended consequence of pupils repeatedly missing the same subject or wider curriculum experiences because of interventions. Withdrawal is planned, time-limited and reviewed.

Pupils and parents/carers are partners in SEND decision-making. Waterside will make information accessible and seek views in ways that reflect communication needs, age, development and individual circumstances.

- Pupils are supported to explain what helps, what makes learning difficult and what outcomes matter to them.
- Parents/carers are invited to share concerns, strengths, history, successful strategies and the impact of needs outside school.
- Meetings should be solution-focused, clear about responsibilities and followed by an accessible record of agreed actions where appropriate.
- Where there is disagreement, the academy will seek to resolve concerns early and explain routes for complaint, mediation or independent advice.

Low attendance can both result from and intensify SEND. Staff should ask what barriers are preventing attendance and consider whether reasonable adjustments, a graduated attendance response, health advice, transport support, alternative provision or multi-agency support are required. SEND does not remove the academy's duty to promote regular attendance or the pupil's entitlement to suitable education.

Behaviour is considered within the wider picture of communication, regulation, safety and need. The academy will make reasonable adjustments to behaviour systems where required by disability, while maintaining clear

boundaries and safeguarding expectations. SEND should inform responses but does not mean unsafe or harmful behaviour is ignored.

Children with SEND may be more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, bullying, child-on-child abuse and online harm, and may face barriers to disclosure. Staff follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and report concerns immediately. A pupil's diagnosis must never be used to explain away injuries, withdrawal, sexualised behaviour, distress, changes in presentation or other safeguarding indicators.

Mental health difficulties may be a special educational need where they create a barrier to learning that calls for special educational provision. The academy does not diagnose. Staff observe, listen, record, refer and support, working with families and health professionals where appropriate.

Pupils with medical conditions are supported so they can access education, trips, PE and the wider life of the academy. A medical condition does not automatically mean a pupil has SEN; however, a pupil may also be disabled under the Equality Act 2010 and/or have SEN requiring special educational provision.

The academy follows its Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and Medicines Policy and uses Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs) where appropriate. From 2026/27, Waterside also follows the statutory Allergy Safety in Schools guidance, including the requirement for an allergy safety policy, appropriate staff training, IHP arrangements for pupils who require them, and learning from serious incidents and near misses.

Where pupils access external alternative provision or off-site education, Waterside retains appropriate oversight of their education, safety, SEND needs and progress in line with the placement and commissioning arrangements. SEND information and reasonable adjustments are shared lawfully with providers on a need-to-know basis so that provision can be delivered safely and effectively.

- Providers are informed of relevant SEND, safeguarding, medical and access needs before placement wherever possible.
- The academy checks that provision is suitable and that staff understand agreed adjustments and support.
- Attendance, engagement, progress, incidents and safeguarding concerns are communicated through agreed arrangements.
- SEND provision is reviewed as part of placement reviews and reintegration or transition planning.
- Use of unregistered provision is managed in accordance with current DfE Alternative Provision guidance and safeguarding requirements.

Transition is planned early and proportionately. This includes entry to Waterside, movement between pathways or off-site provision, reintegration to mainstream or specialist settings, and progression from Year 11 into education, employment or training.

- Relevant SEND records, successful strategies and reasonable adjustments are transferred securely.
- Pupils are supported to visit new settings and understand routines, expectations and support arrangements.
- For pupils with EHCPs, preparation for adulthood outcomes are considered from Year 9 onwards and reflected in annual reviews.
- Careers guidance is accessible and ambitious, with support for applications, interviews, taster visits and transition to FE/training.

Access arrangements are based on evidence of need and the pupil's normal way of working, and are managed in accordance with current JCQ regulations and awarding-body requirements. Teachers, the SENCO,

examinations staff and appropriately qualified assessors work together to gather evidence and make applications within published deadlines.

Access arrangements are not granted solely because a pupil has a diagnosis or EHCP. Arrangements must be supported by evidence and used routinely where required, subject to JCQ rules.

SEND training is identified through induction, supervision, appraisal, quality assurance, cohort need and statutory updates. Training may include autism, ADHD, speech and language, literacy, adaptive teaching, trauma, emotional regulation, sensory needs, medical needs, safeguarding and effective use of teaching assistants.

With appropriate consent or another lawful basis, the academy may seek advice from educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, CAMHS, community paediatrics, sensory services, school nursing, social care, Virtual School services and other relevant professionals. External advice is integrated into teaching and provision rather than treated as a separate add-on.

SEND resources are deployed according to assessed need, statutory duties, commissioned arrangements and local high-needs funding processes. Because Waterside is an alternative provision setting, funding arrangements may differ from mainstream school notional SEN funding models. The academy works with Sefton and other commissioners to secure appropriate top-up or additional resources where required.

Waterside will not discriminate against disabled pupils and will make reasonable adjustments in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The academy's Accessibility Plan sets out how access to the curriculum, physical environment and information will be improved over time.

Where current buildings or facilities create physical barriers, the academy will consider reasonable alternative arrangements, including room changes, adapted timetables, equipment, support or alternative accessible spaces. Off-site providers are expected to make appropriate adjustments and receive relevant access information.

Leaders monitor the effectiveness of SEND provision through progress and attainment information, attendance, behaviour and suspension data, learning walks, work scrutiny, pupil and parent voice, intervention outcomes, provision mapping, EHCP compliance, transition outcomes, external review and governor oversight. Monitoring focuses on impact, not simply whether provision took place.

Concerns about SEND provision should normally be raised first with the relevant teacher, key worker or SENCO so that they can be resolved promptly. Where concerns remain, parents/carers may use the academy's Complaints Policy. Statutory rights relating to EHCP decisions, mediation and the SEND Tribunal are separate from the school complaints process.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if there is a significant change in legislation, statutory guidance, local procedures or the academy's provision. The SEN Information Report is reviewed at least annually and updated during the year where information changes.

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Mandatory qualification for SENCOs: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mandatory-qualification-for-sencos>

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Alternative Provision statutory guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision>

Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>

Allergy Safety in Schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allergy-safety-in-schools>

Sefton Local Offer: <https://www.seftondirectory.com/kb5/sefton/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0>