

SIDE BY SIDE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY

Who is this policy for?	Nursery and School Staff and Parents
Policy Date:	September 2026
Date of next review:	September 2028
Who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating this policy?	School Governors, Headteacher, SENCO
Signed off Date: Governing Body	August 2026

This policy should be read in conjunction with our School Development Plan as well as the following Side by Side policies: Admissions Policy, Curriculum Policy, Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Managing the Administration of Medication and PEG Policy, Manual Handling Policy, Risk Assessment Policy, SEN Disability Access Plan, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Attendance Policy and Physical Intervention and Restrictive Intervention Policy

INTRODUCTION AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy has been developed in accordance with the following statutory requirements and guidance:

- **Children and Families Act 2014**
- **Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014**
- **SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Education Act 1996**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children**

Side by Side School is committed to providing a high-quality, inclusive education that meets the diverse needs of all our pupils. This policy outlines how we identify, assess, and support children with SEN, ensuring that they receive the appropriate provision to achieve their full potential.

This policy reflects Side by Side's core values and ethos, outlining our approach from identifying additional needs to collaborating with families and staff to implement appropriate support. For pupils with an EHCP, this ensures that tailored programmes are designed to meet their individual needs and are integrated into their classroom environment.

DEFINITION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

A child or young person has special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

In accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014, a child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age.

For children under compulsory school age, SEN may be identified where they are likely to fall within this definition when they reach compulsory school age, or would do so if special educational provision were not made for them.

This policy covers the process, from identifying areas of concern to requesting a statutory assessment and an EHCP. It outlines the procedures to be followed from the identification of needs through to Annual and Transition Reviews for pupils with an EHCP.

OUR SENCO TEAM

Head of SEN	Mrs Toby Junger
Nursery SENCO	Mrs Mindy Spitzer
School SENCO	Mrs Udi Goldman
School SENCO (Semi-Formal)	Mrs Chloe Bedford
School SENCO (Complex Needs)	Mrs Naya Alexiou

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that the needs of pupils with SEND are effectively met across the school. Working with the SENCO team and senior leaders, the Headteacher provides strategic oversight of SEND provision, promotes high expectations for all pupils and ensures that appropriate staffing, resources and professional development are in place to support pupils' needs.

The Head of SEN and SENCO Team

The Head of SEN provides comprehensive oversight of SEN provision across Side by Side, supported by the Nursery and School SENCOs, including specialist SENCO responsibility within different areas of provision, coordinating statutory assessment requests and EHCP processes and liaising with Local Authorities and external education, health and social care professionals.

The SENCO team is responsible for:

- overseeing the day-to-day implementation of this policy and coordinating SEN provision;
- supporting the identification, assessment and ongoing review of pupils' needs;
- working with teachers, therapists and other professionals to ensure appropriate provision is planned and implemented;
- supporting staff to develop and implement appropriate strategies, targets and interventions;
- overseeing Annual Reviews and supporting effective transition planning;
- working collaboratively with parents and carers and ensuring that pupils' views are sought and represented appropriately;
- contributing to the monitoring and development of the quality and effectiveness of SEN provision across the school.

Teachers

Teachers retain responsibility for the progress, development and educational provision of every pupil in their class, including where pupils receive additional support from teaching assistants, therapists or other specialist staff.

Teachers work closely with the SENCO team, therapists and support staff to understand each pupil's individual needs, adapt teaching and the learning environment appropriately, implement agreed strategies and interventions, and monitor and review progress towards identified outcomes.

Therapists and Specialist Professionals

The school's therapy team and other specialist professionals work collaboratively with education staff to assess needs, provide specialist advice and intervention, contribute to target-setting and review, and support the integration of appropriate therapeutic strategies within pupils' everyday learning and school experience.

Teaching Assistants/Support Staff

Teaching assistants and other support staff play an important role in implementing agreed strategies and supporting pupils to access learning, develop independence and work towards their individual outcomes. They work under the direction of teachers and relevant specialist staff and contribute observations and information to the ongoing assessment and review of pupils' progress.

Trustees/Governing Body

The Governing Body provides strategic oversight of SEN provision and holds school leaders to account for the quality and effectiveness of provision for pupils with SEND.

Trustees seek assurance that pupils' needs are appropriately identified and met, that leaders maintain high expectations for pupils with SEND, and that appropriate resources, staffing and professional development are available to support effective provision.

PUPIL AND PARENT PARTNERSHIP

Side by Side recognises parents and carers as key partners in understanding and supporting their child's needs. We aim to work collaboratively with families throughout identification, assessment, target-setting, intervention and review, and to ensure that parents have meaningful opportunities to contribute to decisions about their child's education and provision.

The views, wishes and aspirations of pupils are equally important. We recognise that many of our pupils communicate in different ways and may not be able to express their views verbally or through conventional methods. Staff will therefore use the most appropriate means of communication for the individual pupil, which may include AAC, photographs, symbols, observation, supported choice-making and input from those who know the pupil well.

Pupil voice will be sought wherever appropriate in relation to their learning, support, EHCP and Annual Review, transition planning and preparation for adulthood.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION

Side by Side Nursery Classes welcome all children, including mainstream children, those whose parents have raised concerns at intake, and children with identified special educational needs. Most children will enter the nursery without an EHCP, except for those with identified complex or medical needs.

We also recognise that some children who start nursery without identified needs may, over time, present developmental concerns that require support.

INTAKE

As part of our application process, the information pack completed by parents includes questions designed to help us understand each child's needs. Where SEND needs are indicated on the application form, the SENCO or Nursery Manager will contact parents to discuss these further and invite them to an assessment day before the child starts nursery.

BASELINE ASSESSMENTS

To effectively monitor children's progress, all new children will undergo a baseline assessment. This will include information from previous settings (where applicable) and the 'About Me' passport completed upon entry. The baseline assessment will typically be the Two-Year-Old Progress Check or our own internal baseline assessment for older children.

We are committed to working closely with any professionals involved in supporting our pupils. For children already undergoing the statutory EHCP assessment process, we are happy to provide advice. **We strongly recommend that parents continue with any therapy their child is receiving (e.g., from Hackney Ark) while attending Side by Side.**

A GRADUATED APPROACH

The SEND Code of Practice emphasises the importance of identifying desired outcomes, including expected progress and attainment. At all stages, parents - and, wherever possible, the pupils' themselves—should be actively involved in the process.

Side by Side follows a graduated approach to identifying and meeting additional needs, based on the four-part cycle of 'Assess – Plan – Do – Review'. This is an ongoing process in which the pupil's needs are assessed, appropriate support and desired outcomes are planned, interventions and strategies are implemented, and their effectiveness is reviewed. Support is adjusted in response to the pupil's progress and changing needs.

Teachers retain responsibility for the progress and development of the pupils they teach, working collaboratively with the SENCO team, therapists, support staff, parents and other professionals as appropriate.

A cause for concern may be characterised by progress which:

- Is significantly slower than their peers starting from the same baseline
- Fails to match or better the child's previous rate of progress
- Fails to close the attainment gap between the child and their peers
- Widens the attainment gap

Response to Concerns and Interventions

- The first response will involve the teacher targeting their teaching to address the areas of weakness.
- If progress remains slower or deviates from expectations, the teacher will involve the SENCO. The SENCO will then gather evidence to gain a clearer understanding of the child's needs.
- Additional intervention should not be delayed in an attempt to secure progress. This may include involving external professionals such as therapists (SLT, OT, PT), educational psychologists, paediatricians, and other health or social care professionals.

Factors Staff Should Always Consider

- **Behaviour** – Poor behaviour does not necessarily indicate that a pupil has SEN. If behavioural issues arise, all potential factors should be explored to identify any underlying causes. Environmental factors can also have a significant impact on a child's behaviour.
- **Slow Progress** – Slow progress does not automatically imply that a child has SEN. It should not be recorded as such unless there are clear indicators that raise concerns for further assessment.
- **Specific Difficulties** – A pupil may excel academically yet face challenges in other areas, such as social and communication skills.
- **English as an Additional Language (EAL)** – EAL is not considered a special educational need. Staff should consider all areas of progress to determine whether the difficulty is related to EAL or SEN.

The Broad Areas to Consider:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical need

BASELINE

All pupils who join the school will undergo a baseline assessment after the first six weeks, providing data to monitor their progress. For many pupils, this assessment will be conducted alongside the Two-Year-Old Progress Check.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Side by Side's nursery offers a unique setting where mainstream children learn and play alongside children with additional and/or special needs. Parents may choose to send their children with some developmental delays to receive the additional support they need, although in these cases, an EHCP is unlikely to be required.

Our nursery staff will closely monitor all children's progress to identify and address any areas of concern. It is possible that a child entering as a mainstream pupil may develop areas that require additional support.

Where appropriate, Pupil Support Plans (PSPs) or therapeutic targets will be implemented to support the children. These will be developed collaboratively with parents and relevant staff.

In addition to the input from the class teacher and the children's key workers, Side by Side is able to provide further support and guidance to enhance the classroom environment, ensuring that children experiencing difficulties receive the necessary support.

SPECIALIST SUPPORT

SENCO – We have a team of SENCOs who provide input into the nursery setting, irrespective of whether an EHCP is required. They work closely with the class teacher and key workers to explore different strategies that can help children access learning and make progress.

Educational Psychology – When a specific need is identified, Side by Side commissions a consultant Educational Psychologist to observe the child and provide further advice on how best to support their development.

Therapeutic Input – Direct therapy is typically offered once a pupil has an EHCP, which provides the necessary funding. However, our in-house therapy team works within the classroom to support all children. They may set up additional groups, such as language and communication or pre-writing sessions, to provide early intervention and additional support.

External Professionals – Side by Side works closely with external agencies that provide support to the families or children e.g. Hackney Ark CDC.

INTEGRATED AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY WORKING

Side by Side takes an integrated approach to meeting pupils' educational, communication, sensory, physical, social and emotional needs. Teachers, SENCOs, therapists and support staff work collaboratively to ensure that strategies and therapeutic recommendations are embedded, where appropriate, throughout the pupil's school day rather than being viewed solely as separate interventions.

Our provision may include universal approaches available across the school, targeted support for identified areas of need and specialist individualised intervention. The level and type of provision will be determined by the pupil's individual needs and, where applicable, the provision specified within their EHCP.

Staff work closely with relevant external health, education and social care professionals to promote consistency of approach and effective multidisciplinary planning.

STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Side by Side is committed to ensuring that staff have the knowledge, skills and confidence required to understand and respond effectively to the diverse and often complex needs of our pupils. SEND forms an important part of staff induction and ongoing professional development, with training informed by the needs and presentation of the pupils within the school.

Training and professional development may include, according to staff roles and pupil needs:

- understanding autism and different presentations of neurodevelopmental need;
- supporting pupils with complex and profound learning needs;
- communication development, including the effective use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and other communication approaches;
- supporting speech, language and interaction needs;
- sensory processing and regulation;
- supporting physical development, mobility and positioning;
- dysphagia, eating and drinking needs and safe feeding practices;
- supporting pupils with medical and healthcare needs;
- emotional regulation, social and emotional development and positive approaches to behaviour;
- safe and appropriate approaches to physical support and restrictive intervention;
- supporting independence, functional skills and preparation for adulthood; and
- safeguarding children with SEND, including recognising the additional vulnerabilities and communication barriers that some pupils may experience.

Training may be delivered or supported by members of the SENCO and therapy teams, senior leaders, healthcare professionals and external specialists. Staff are also supported through ongoing professional dialogue, modelling, coaching and multidisciplinary working so that specialist knowledge is translated effectively into pupils' everyday provision.

REQUESTS FOR STATUTORY ASSESSMENT (EHCP)

Once a pupil has accessed a range of interventions and targets have been set, we will review their progress in collaboration with parents to determine whether a statutory request for an EHCP is required. If deemed necessary, the appropriate forms and supporting evidence will be completed and submitted to the Local Authority.

In a small number of cases, where the need is evident, and additional input is essential for the pupil to access the setting, a statutory request will be made upon entry.

Pupil Input into the EHCP

As most of our EHCPs are for our youngest pupils and/or those with significant needs, the SENCO will work with the class teacher to determine the most appropriate way to include the child in the meeting. This may involve creating a child passport using photographs to illustrate their interests, areas where they need support, and activities they find challenging.

Parents will be actively involved throughout the entire process, ensuring a collaborative approach to supporting their child's needs.

PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING REVIEWS

For children and young people with an EHCP, a formal Annual Review is undertaken at least every 12 months. For children under five, the Local Authority may consider more frequent reviews, in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice and taking account of the child's individual circumstances and rapidly changing developmental needs. This review provides an opportunity to evaluate progress over the past year, assess the suitability of current provisions and interventions, and set new targets for the coming year.

Our goal is for Annual Reviews to be positive, proactive, and interactive meetings, ensuring that all stakeholders - the Local Authority, parents, the pupil (where appropriate), and the school - work collaboratively to support the child's development.

While progress is reviewed and evaluated throughout the year, the Annual Review serves as the formal opportunity to monitor and adjust the EHCP as needed, ensuring it remains aligned with the child's evolving needs.

The procedure for arranging, conducting, and reporting on Annual Reviews follows the guidelines set out in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, ensuring a structured and thorough evaluation of each child's EHCP.

➤ **Collection of Information prior to the Annual Review:**

To ensure a comprehensive review, Side by Side will gather written advice from the child's parents, class teacher, and TAs, as well as all therapists and specialist teachers involved with the child both in and out of school. Input will also be requested from any relevant outside agencies, such as social care or community nurses. In all cases, the child's views should be recorded using the most appropriate method. A copy of all collected advice will be shared with all invited participants at least two weeks before the Annual Review meeting.

➤ **Convening the Meeting:**

Every effort will be made to schedule the meeting at a time convenient for parents, who will be consulted in advance to agree on a suitable date and time. Side by Side will also endeavour to ensure that all relevant school professionals attend the meeting, though part-time therapists and staff may sometimes be unavailable. The meeting will typically be chaired by the SENCO and attended by the Headteacher or Nursery Manager.

➤ **The Annual Review Meeting:**

The main focus of the meeting will depend on the child's stage in their school journey and any pressing concerns that have arisen since the last Touch Base meeting. The meeting will review the child's overall progress in meeting the objectives set out in the EHCP over the past year, discuss any changes to their circumstances, special needs, or requirements, and set targets for the coming year, which will be broken down into smaller steps within the Pupil Support Plan. The timing of the next review will also be agreed upon.

➤ **After the Meeting:**

- A summary report of the meeting, along with all relevant reports and recommendations, will be sent to the Local Authority and parents.
- The LA will review the EHCP in light of the report and any recommendations made.
- The LA is required to notify parents in writing of any decisions made, along with the reasons for those decisions.

TRANSITIONS

Side by Side recognises that transitions can be particularly significant for pupils with SEND. Appropriate planning will therefore take place when pupils join the school, move between classes or phases, or transfer to another educational setting.

Transition arrangements will be tailored to the individual pupil and may include liaison with parents and professionals, exchange of relevant information, visits, visual supports, familiarisation activities and phased transition arrangements where appropriate.

Where a pupil is moving to another setting, including where progress enables a pupil to move to a less specialist or mainstream placement, Side by Side will work collaboratively with the receiving setting and family to support a positive and well-planned transition.

➤ **Transition and Preparing for Adulthood**

From Year 9 onwards, preparation for adulthood becomes an increasingly important part of planning and review. This includes consideration, according to each pupil's needs and aspirations, of further education and/or employment, independent living, participation in the community, relationships and maintaining good health.

Preparation for adulthood is not limited to formal transition reviews. Opportunities to develop communication, independence, choice-making, functional learning, community participation and life skills are embedded within pupils' educational programmes throughout their time at Side by Side, at a level appropriate to their individual needs.

Each child with an EHCP is required to receive a transition plan after their Annual Review in Year 9 and in subsequent years. This document consolidates input from the child, their parents, and all involved professionals to begin planning the transition from school to adult life. The plan will evolve over time and must consider the child's aspirations, interests, and needs, outlining how these will be supported in the long term.

As the pupil moves towards the end of their school career, we work closely with parents to ensure that the necessary support is in place for accessing further education, housing, benefits, employment, and health and social services, if needed in the future. This process also ensures that the pupil's needs are well known to all relevant local services.

SEND AND SAFEGUARDING

Side by Side recognises that children with SEND may face additional safeguarding vulnerabilities and that communication difficulties can create further barriers to recognising or reporting concerns. Staff must remain alert to changes in behaviour, presentation, communication or emotional wellbeing and must not assume that these are attributable solely to a pupil's special educational needs or disability.

All safeguarding concerns must be responded to in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and reported promptly through the school's safeguarding procedures.

THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Side by Side is committed to ensuring that pupils with SEND and disabilities are able to access education, the school environment and wider school life as fully as possible. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, reasonable adjustments are made where required to avoid placing disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage.

Adjustments are considered according to individual need and may relate to the physical environment, curriculum and teaching approaches, communication, specialist equipment or technology, staffing and support arrangements, or the way in which activities are organised and delivered. Further information is set out in the School's SEN Disability Access Plan.

At Side by Side School, our facilities are specifically designed to meet the diverse educational, physical, therapeutic, and medical needs of learners with a range of abilities, including, but not limited to, profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, sensory processing difficulties, physical disabilities, dysphagia, hearing and vision impairments, and communication difficulties. We also support learners with behavioural needs, medical conditions, and those requiring therapeutic interventions.

Our purpose-built environment plays a central role in supporting each pupil's development, ensuring that their needs are met in an inclusive, supportive, and stimulating setting.

Our facilities include:

- **Classrooms** fitted with interactive whiteboards and assistive technology to enhance the learning experience.
- **Sensory Rooms and Dedicated Sensory Spaces within the Classrooms** for sensory regulation, offering a safe and calming space for pupils' who may become overwhelmed.
- **Specialist OT Rooms** designed to support sensory integration and occupational therapy activities.
- **Specialist PT Rooms** providing a space for physiotherapy sessions to enhance mobility and physical development.
- **Music Therapy Room** focused on emotional health, using music as a therapeutic tool to support pupils' emotional well-being and expression.
- **1:1 Therapy Rooms** for personalised therapy sessions tailored to meet each pupil's unique needs.
- **Off-Site Hydrotherapy facility** for hydro-based physiotherapy exercises, offering targeted support for pupils' with profound disabilities and promoting physical development.
- **Break-Off rooms** used for quiet spaces, as well as 1:1 or small group break-off learning sessions, providing a calm and focused environment for pupils'.
- **Medical Room** where the school nurse sees pupils who need medical attention, ensuring that their health and well-being are closely monitored and cared for.
- **Specialised Rooftop Sensory Garden** for planting and relaxation, providing a peaceful outdoor environment for sensory exploration and therapeutic gardening activities.
- **School Hall**, used for whole school activities and a variety of mixed-use purposes to promote community and interaction.
- **Soft Room** A space designed to support pupils' emotional regulation and physical development.
- **Mobile Projector** for use in interactive learning sessions, promoting engagement and participation.
- **Hoists** to ensure that pupils' with mobility challenges can access all areas of the school safely and comfortably.
- **Common Room** for our older pupils, offering a social space that encourages interaction, relaxation, and the development of life skills in preparation for adulthood.
- **Hygiene Suites**, fully accessible, to meet the personal care needs of our pupils' with dignity and comfort.
- **Outdoor Areas** for play, socialising, and encouraging peer to peer interaction and development outside the classroom.

- **Meeting Rooms** for parent meetings, reviews, and training, promoting collaboration and communication between the school and families.
- **School Kitchen** with modern facilities, used for pupil cookery sessions, offering a hands-on space for pupils' to develop cooking skills and engage in food preparation activities.
- **Lifts** to ensure easy movement between floors for pupils' with mobility challenges.

Our facilities are designed to create a colourful, stimulating, and supportive environment that caters to the individual needs of pupils' with varying levels of special educational needs. Each space is especially tailored to ensure that pupils' with different levels of need receive the appropriate support. The environment promotes independence, choice-making, and communication, empowering pupils' to progress at their own pace and develop essential life skills tailored to their unique abilities and needs.

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Side by Side values open and constructive communication with parents and carers. Where a parent or carer has a concern about their child's SEN provision, we encourage them to raise this at the earliest opportunity with the class teacher or relevant SENCO so that the matter can be discussed and, wherever possible, resolved collaboratively.

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, parents and carers may raise the matter through the School's Complaints Policy.